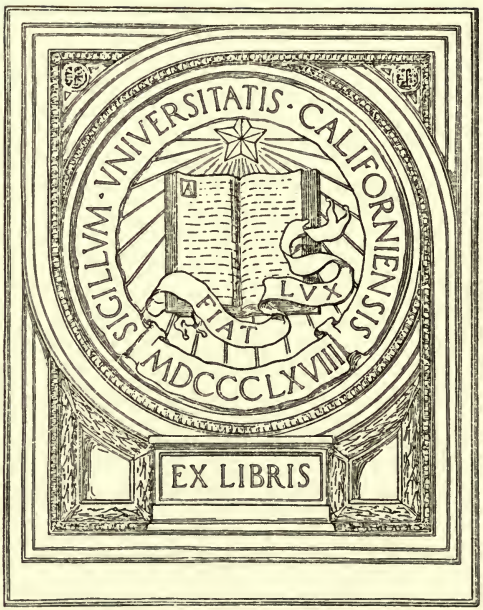
CAPTAIN COURTESY

EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER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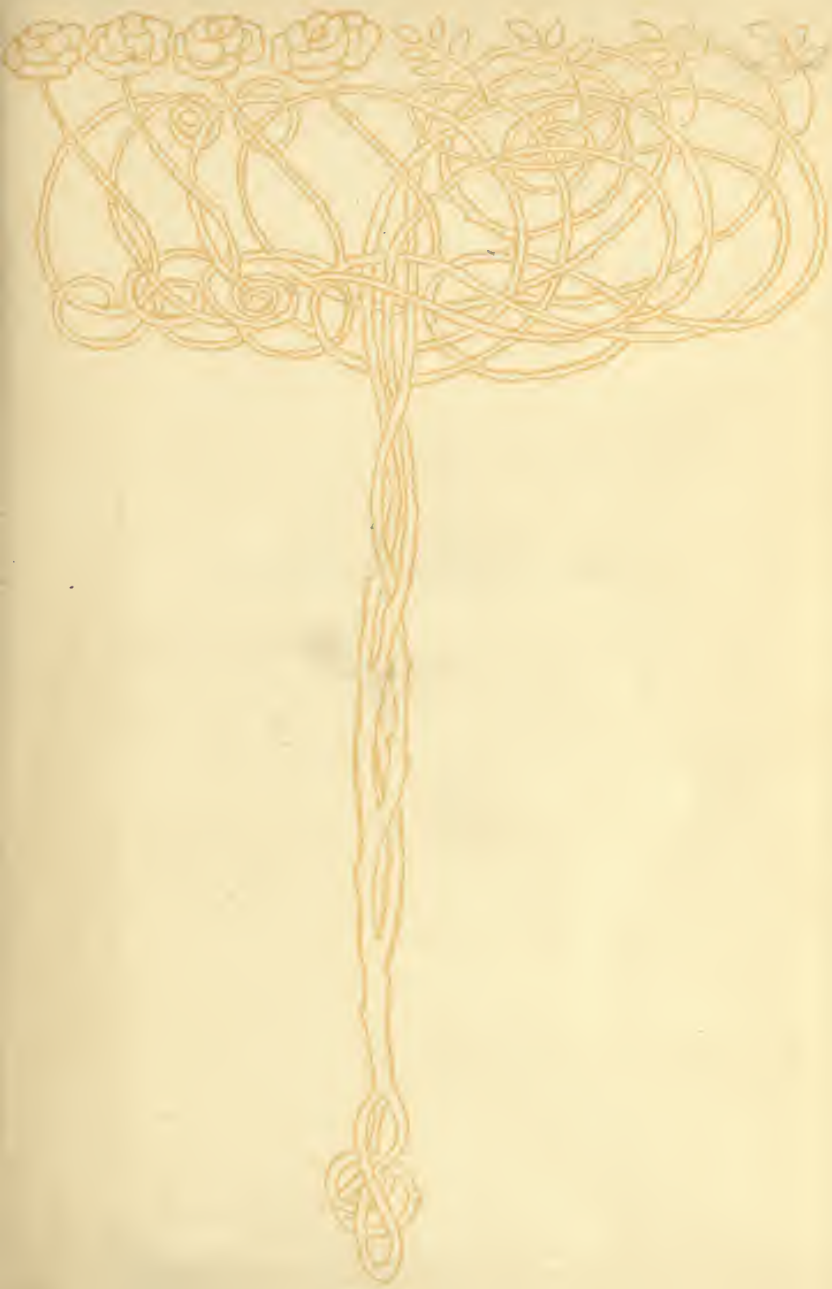

CAPTAIN COURTESY

"I Can't Make Out—It Whispers, Only Whispers"

CAPTAIN COURTESY

BY

EDWARD CHILDS CARPENTER

Five Illustrations in Color
by
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SHE INSISTED THAT
THIS SHOULD BE A
LOVE STORY; THERE-
FORE I DEDICATE IT
TO HER—MY MOTHER

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"I AM THE VERY PINK OF COURTESY"

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CAPTAIN COURTESY

CHAPTER I

"I AM THE VERY PINK OF COURTESY"

FACUNDO MARTINES, the Mexican courier, with gold in his saddle-bags and despatches under his leathern jacket, rode furiously down the fragrant San Gabriel Valley. He feared the night which in California extinguishes the day as one snuffs a candle. He looked anxiously to the west. The sun lingered but a moment over the mountain peaks, then flung up its golden arms and sank in a sea of crimson and purple. Facundo turned his face to the east. The night was riding faster than he. It overtook him and, like a pall, enveloped him. No longer able to distinguish the trail, he was obliged to

travel slowly, consoling himself with the thought that he was within three miles of the presidio at San Gabriel, where he might stop for the night and in the early morning hasten on to Los Nietos and deliver gold and despatches to General Castro.

"Then," mused he, "with my pay in my pocket, I shall buy the red scarf which Señorita Rosa so much admired and we shall see whether or no Juan —"

"Pardon, Señor; your saddle-bags!"

At this command, breaking wierdly from out the darkness, the courier pulled up his horse sharply and reached for his pistol.

"I said your saddle-bags — not your holster!" These words were spoken quietly but ominously, in staccato measure, like the click of the gun-hammer which accompanied them. The voice was close to Facundo, directly in front of him, in fact, and then he saw, as through a veil of black crape, the figure of a horseman with rifle resting on his sad-

dle-bow. "A thousand pardons, Señor," continued the highwayman suavely, extending his hand, "but I shall not make a third request."

"*Madre de Dios!*" whimpered the courier, as with trembling fingers he unstrapped his saddle-bags; "His Excellency will flog me for this!"

"Castro!" ejaculated the road-agent, relieving the Mexican of the gold. "Then you are the courier from Pio Pico."

Facundo involuntarily pressed his hand to his jacket.

"I fear I shall have to trouble you for the despatches, Señor." The highwayman playfully tapped the Mexican's breast with the rifle muzzle.

"His Excellency will hang me," sobbed Facundo.

"I should be sorry for that," remarked the other; "but what is one man compared with a whole settlement? I fancy these despatches order another raid on some American colony."

"I beg of you, Señor, give them back to me," besought the courier; "they are of no service to you — they are written in cypher."

"They are all the more important for that." The highwayman thrust the documents in his shirt. "But wait," said he, "I may yet save your neck for you. Take this dirk." He offered Facundo a knife, the hilt of which was gold and set with gems. "I borrowed it of Castro myself. Present it to him and say that the man who waylaid you took the occasion to return his toy. He will know then for a certainty that it was no fault of yours that you were so — eh — compromised tonight."

"The Mother of God bless you," exclaimed the Mexican.

"A safe journey to you, Señor," returned the other, making way for the courier.

"Pardon, Excellency," ventured Facundo; "what — what is your name?"

"Captain Courtesy!"

"*Diablo!*"

So startled was the Mexican that he jerked suddenly upon the rein, and his horse, unaccustomed to such usage, reared and then stampeded down the trail.

He who called himself Captain Courtesy smiled as he sat listening to the rapid, receding tread of unshod hoofs, a sound which now came to his ears like the distant, irregular beat of a drum. The surprise and panic which the captain's name inspired, were a source of both amusement and satisfaction to him. The discomfiture of a Mexican, even of one so humble as Facundo, was balm to a heart long tortured with a lust for vengeance. On the highway he wreaked it, and there was not a man of the courier's nationality throughout California, from the year 1840 to 1847, who did not hate and fear Captain Courtesy.

His father, Hugh Davis, was one of those rugged, iron-nerved pioneers of the thirties, who emi-

grated from the States with his wife — a dainty Castilian, daughter of a secretary in the Spanish legation at the Capital — and his child, and settled in California near San Pedro. There he prospered, reckoning his wealth in immense droves of cattle and rich orange-groves; living at peace with his countrymen who, like him, had come to make homes in that golden land; with the Indians whose birthplace it was; and with the Mexicans who ruled the territory.

The son, Leonard, or Leonardo, as his mother called him after the Spanish fashion, was brought up to manage the ranches. His father was the comrade of his days — long delicious days, men's days — spent in the saddle in the sunshine and the rain, the good red blood of youth pulsing with the very joy of life's battle. When night came, these comrades made a shrine of the ranch house hearth and in intimate communion drew from her — who was to them divinity and wife, sweetheart and

mother — that dear knowledge, bred of woman's tenderness, which makes the heart of man grow stronger.

Life and nature, God and mankind, appeared to Leonardo as one beneficent personality, administering a reign of peace and plenty. So secure was his faith in this generous and protecting symbol, that he laughed when first his father reported rumors that the Mexican government, heated to madness by jealousy and avarice, had determined upon the expulsion of Americans from California. Leonardo would not credit it, even when word came that General Castro was ordering men under arms for the avowed purpose of destroying the crops, burning the ranches, and killing those settlers from the States who might resist his raiding regiments. It was beyond the youth's comprehension that man could be so malevolent.

But his father felt less secure. He knew how the Mexican government wasted the Franciscan

missions through secularization; how Alvarado, the governor, distributed the wealth of the friars among his friends. He understood the Mexican character of those days, a character primarily of rascality and greed; and he fancied that the settlers from the United States might well expect a treatment even more despicable than that vouchsafed the missionaries. While he kept these fears to himself, like many another American, who had made his home in California, he began to consider the necessity of armed resistance.

Yet all these misgivings were slow to stimulate action. Success had bred security. Those pioneers, living in a golden age, had eaten of the lotus, and warnings of calamity seemed to them only as rude, unreal whisperings disturbing the cloistered peacefulness of their dreams.

When Castro's raiders came, they came with swift stealth, striking without warning, like night squalls at sea, leaving a wake of destruction, and

fleeing as though they feared the dawn's discovery.

Leonardo had ridden to Pasadena to sell sheep, and was therefore many miles away when a Mexican regiment, under the command of a renegade American, devastated his father's ranches. He returned at dusk. He had no premonition of what awaited him, only as he drew near the hacienda, he was struck with the stillness of the place, a stillness profound, unnatural, ominous. He paused adread, scanning the house from veranda to shingled gable, from wing to corral. Then all his blood seemed to rush into his heart. He grew cold to the elbows. He was staring at the door-sill, across which lay the figure of a man, scarcely visible in the descending gloom.

His horse shivered. He dismounted, advanced toward the door, and stopped. Beyond the figure on the sill, but within reach of it, lay another. He clutched at a veranda pillar and for a long time leaned heavily against it, almost without a

thought. It were as though his reason had suffered an eclipse. Presently the moon, mounting over a hillside of chaparral, flung its beam across the doorway, lighting the rigid forms with terrible distinctness.

Leonardo stirred. A cry, which at the same time was a sob, came from his heart. A woman's arm outstretched, a man's fingers clasping hers — so they had died. There were bullet marks on the door-jamb, blood stains upon the floor. The testimony of the deed was there. The youth read it. They had probably been at supper. Someone called from without. The husband opened the door. He was greeted with a shot. He staggered, his wounded hand grasping at the door-frame. His wife ran to him. There came a volley. They fell. This had happened the night before.

Leonardo buried them, their fingers still entwined, under a great redwood. Dawn surprised

him there. Its cold light disclosed a scene of desolation and explained the quiet of the place. The fences were destroyed, crops and buildings burned. Only the ranch house remained unscathed — the dead had guarded their hearth.

"Vengeance!" At first it was as a whisper from afar which he scarcely heard. "Vengeance!" It was a call as from across the orchard drawing nearer. "Vengeance!" It was a cry as from the house close by. "Vengeance!" It was a command as from the grave at his feet. He obeyed it.

All that morning he rode the trail of the raiders until it was lost on the common highway. But as he rode a lust for vengeance grew in his heart. He became crazed with it. What matter where or how he wreaked it, so long as it might be upon Mexicans!

In the afternoon he reached Santa Ana and with the recklessness of impassioned youth — he was

but twenty then — galloped up to the presidio where a Mexican regiment was quartered. The soldiers, taking their siestas in the shade of the patio walls, looked up in lazy wonder at the wild-eyed rider and his lathered horse. He called for their colonel. The officer showed himself at the doorway.

"You killed my father — my mother — on their threshold — as you stand now!" It was the voice of vengeance crying from the heart of Leonardo. Mechanically he threw up his gun and fired. The man flung out his hand in protest, as the ball crashed through his shoulder. He tottered and dropped across the door-sill.

Shot upon shot echoed in the courtyard. Leonardo's horse fell, holding him prisoner. In this predicament, he was easily overpowered. The Mexicans put him in the guard-house. That night he effected his escape. The next day General Castro set a price upon his head. Branded

an outlaw, he became one, and was soon regarded as the scourge of the highways.

He took a savage delight in waylaying Mexicans. But, at the same time, an innate chivalry, even upon the highway, asserted itself. His robberies were ceremonies, conducted with whimsy, with diabolical politeness. His formula was not, "Your money or your life!"— he began with profuse apologies, regretting that he should be obliged to interrupt the journeying horseman, and concluded by stripping his victim of purse and every ornament to his very spurs. That he spared his fellow countrymen and was gallant to all women — no matter what their caste or nationality — won for him the sobriquet, Captain Courtesy.

When, early in the year 1846, the American settlers — learning that without concentrated action they could no longer protect their homes against Mexican depredation — began the organization of

a revolution, Captain Courtesy, through agents, placed his spoil in the hands of the patriot leaders, rejoicing that he might aid in the overthrow of the Mexican government. And the pioneers, having the intimation that, were they successful, the United States would annex the territory, took heart and throughout California men were answering the call to arms.

This movement was an inspiration to the captain. He had warred alone and the keen edge of vengeance was dulled by six years of solitary adventure — and how lonely and empty they had been! — but now he took the road avidly and with a new purpose. He was the self-appointed taxer of the Mexican purse for the treasury of a new California.

No wonder, then, that Facundo, the Mexican courier, bereft of gold and despatches on the Pasadena trail, was terror-stricken with the discovery that it was Captain Courtesy who waylaid him;

nor was it strange, either, when his mustang bolted, that he made no effort to check her mad gait until he saw the lights of the presidio on the outskirts of San Gabriel.

"BLACK SPIRITS AND WHITE, RED SPIRITS AND GRAY"

CHAPTER II

"BLACK SPIRITS AND WHITE, RED SPIRITS AND GRAY"

OLDIERS and missionaries of Spain together made conquest of California. They that bore the sword built the presidios, they that carried the cross established the missions. The first was for defense against the Indians, the second for their salvation.

The presidio toward which Facundo, the courier, hastened, was at once fortress, barracks, and storehouse. Its thick adobe walls, now white in the moonlight, stood as high as the dwellings, warehouses, and chapel, which they protected. Bronze cannon, "creators of thunder," as the Indians called them, commanded its four corners. Huge, heavy-timbered gates, wearing the scars of many a siege, protected the entrances. Fancy a walled

town, done in miniature, and you have the presidio.

It was garrisoned by a regiment, ostensibly under the command of a young Mexican, Lieutenant Jocoso, but in reality under the orders of a renegade American, George Granville, who, while holding a secret commission as colonel in the Mexican army, affected a keen sympathy with the revolution of his countrymen. He occupied a hacienda on the edge of the Mission of San Gabriel Arcangel, which was under the immediate rule of the presidio commandant.

As Facundo, his mare winded, himself hatless and yellow with dust, drew up at the north presidio gate, he met Padre Reinaldo, priest at the San Gabriel mission. The good father, scenting news, inquired the cause of the courier's haste. Facundo, stopping out of respect, briefly recounted his adventure, and hurried into the patio, while the padre turned toward San Gabriel, laughing softly as he went. From which it might be inferred that he

did not altogether disapprove of Captain Courtesy. In truth, the padre himself was a revolutionist, for in the Americans, a new people, he saw the liberators of California.

His sympathy in their brave endeavor was born of the attitude of the government toward the Church. The missions had been under the control of a father president, responsible for his rule to his superiors in the College of San Fernando in the City of Mexico; but the government secularized them — placed their administration in the hands of unprincipled men who grew rich by despoiling them of lands, crops, and cattle, leaving the padres — the weavers of prosperity — but as mayordomos of wasted and decaying estates.

The Mission of San Gabriel Arcangel, whither Padre Reinaldo now directed his steps, was formerly the wealthiest in California, but under secularization it became one of the poorest. It lay about a mile below the presidio on a rivulet in a

valley which once was rich with gardens of sweet-scented flowers; orchards of pears, apples, oranges, and pomegranates; vineyards and golden grain-fields — gridironed with irrigating ditches, their banks fringed with oak, sycamore, and elder trees; pastures grazed by great herds of sheep and cattle; and peopled with neophytes — Indians redeemed from savagery by the friars and taught to be husbandmen, herdsmen, craftsmen, millers, weavers, and saddlers — their adobe dwellings, shops, mills, and corral sheds, glowing from out the green of the garden like amber under the noonday sun.

A great cactus hedge encircled this paradise and encompassed the church — a huge, oblong structure with tiled roof and severe walls, from which the weather had stripped bits of its cement coating, showing stone and brick beneath in colorful patches. The mission looked more like a fortress than a sanctuary. High buttresses broke the monotony of the walls at regular intervals, their

pointed caps rising almost flush with the tower, which was a sort of pyramid, perforated with odd-sized arches wherein swung the mission bells. Nestled against the tower, as though it sought protection, was the priest's house, a low, simple domicile of white plaster with deep shingled roof, its veranda a wealth of rose vines and adventurous verbena.

A eucalyptus-shaded walk led one to the little graveyard back of the church, and along this Padre Reinaldo now made his way. He stopped at the protecting fence, prayed there in silence for a moment, and then looked over the old, moonlit domain of San Gabriel, itself almost become a cemetery.

Where were the one-time prodigal harvests of fruit and grain, the great lowing herds which crowded the corrals, the folds with sheep ready for the shearing, the happy, toiling neophyte bands? Gone! And only their phantoms lingered in the

valley for one, who, like the old padre, upon such a moonlit night, saw them dimly through a veil of tears.

The fields were growing riotous with mustard-seed, the water-ways dry, the orchards withering, the stock depleted to a meagre herd, the 'dobe mills and shops and dwellings falling into ruins, and a handful of Indians where a thousand once mustered: this was the pass to which San Gabriel had come.

"But I shall die happy," mused the courageous old priest, "for this righteous revolution will succeed, the Americans will drive the despoilers from the land, restore the Church her rights and San Gabriel will bloom again."

Even as he stood there pondering, the belligerency of Mexican and American usurped the peace of the mission. Lieutenant Jocoso, commanding the regiment at the presidio, had come — as was his custom of an evening — to woo Viviena Mar-

shall, and stayed to quarrel with her. She was a young American woman, mercifully widowed while yet in her teens and left penniless at a little pueblo near San Gabriel. She found, however, a friend and protector in Padre Reinaldo, and by his grace lived in one of the abandoned neophyte quarters close by the church, and performed the functions of mayordomo at San Gabriel, managing, with thrift and authority, what little business they were still able to maintain. But more than this she was the adored companion of Eleanor Brinton, the padre's ward, a girl of twenty, who, when a child, had lost her parents in a Mexican raid.

In spite of this she was friendly to Jocoso, who was naïve and chivalrous by nature and, so far as lay in his power, protected San Gabriel from depredation. His position at the presidio brought him in intimate relation with the life at the mission, where he was welcomed by Eleanor and the padre and plagued by Viviena, who encouraged him one

day and dismissed him the next. Although he took his rebuffs much to heart, he was a persistent wooer, knowing no such word as failure.

That very night upon which Captain Courtesy waylaid the Mexican courier, Jocoso sulked in a great oak chair within the mission. Handsome, of medium height, trim and soldierly, he carried with distinction a resplendent uniform consisting of a full-dress coat of dark blue cloth with scarlet facings and gold epaulettes, a waist-coat of lighter blue and pantaloons of the same shade ornamented with gold lace piping down the seams. A scarlet sash covered his sword belt. His tall chaco, with pompon of green, white, and red, lay upon the floor beside him.

Now and again he would rumple up his long black hair in agitation and glance surreptitiously over his shoulder at Viviena, who, having turned her back upon him, affected a deep interest in the play of flames in the fireplace.

Save for a solitary candle, burning on the heavy oak table at the widow's elbow, the only illumination was that kindled by the blazing logs. When the flames leaped with a draught, the light flung across the floor of baked brick tiles, routed the shadows for a moment and revealed the plastered walls, hung with pictures of saints; the windows set with leaded glass; and the ponderous oak doors ornamented with wrought iron hinge, latch, and bar.

This picturesque environment, however, was lost upon the lieutenant. His thoughts were only for that strange beauty of the north, with golden yellow hair, like the poppy of his native land, and blue eyes of a tint familiar in his southern heaven.

He turned in his chair, straddling it. Though his sword clanked as he manœuvred, Viviena paid no heed to him. She sat complacently, fully aware that her semi-Spanish toilette of black lace — unrelieved save for a bit of verbena coquettishly fastened at her shoulder — would subdue him.

"Eh — Señora!" he finally ventured; "Señora Marshallo, I much like to make up peace with you. Say, you tell me what meaning is of ugly name you make for me. I get angry only at him." He waited for a reply. The widow, however, remained silent, so he went on pleasantly: "'Bully,' you say. What that is?"

Viviena examined him impudently, through half-closed lids, and rejoined, "It characterizes you — all Mexicans. It means that you are brutes, tyrants. Do you understand that?"

Jocoso took this amiably. In fact, he smiled as he nodded. "*Si, si, Señora! Gracias!*" He paused, trying to think in English, then added, "Americanos not bully?"

The widow regarded this question as an insult. "No," she returned hotly; "we do not make war for the sake of conquest — we are fighting for our homes; for the independence of California."

This brought Jocoso to his feet. He was hunt-

ing for a suitable retort. What he finally said was, "You Americanos make big words."

"We do more than that," the widow threatened across the table; "just you wait until our riflemen are backed by the United States troops under Frémont and Kearny; we'll make it so hot for you that you'll be glad to get back to Mexico to cool off."

Jocoso twirled his moustache, rolled his eyes, and smiling in what he considered his most fascinating way, murmured, "I not like go back accounth you not there."

"So you stay here with a regiment and keep San Gabriel under surveillance."

The lieutenant was proof against her sarcasm. "Hah," he exclaimed; "my orders, I cannot help — only glad — so long they keep me by you some time."

The widow curtsied to him. "Thank you," she mocked, "but I should like you better without your

regiment. I mean — I should like your regiment without you."

"Perhaps, Señora, it is true you wish me not here?" He leaned across the table toward her, his black eyes studying her cunningly. "*Si, si,* becows Padre Reinaldo, and Señorita Brinton, and you make beezness of send money, also secret despatches to Americano rebels?"

"You are very much mistaken," declared Viviena, too hotly to be convincing.

Jocoso laughed. "No matter. I can be blind when I no wish to see. I make proof to you I am that bully not. I shall —"

He was interrupted by a knock at the door, which the widow answered, admitting a tall American, whose age might have been guessed as thirty-five.

"*Buenas noches,* Señor Granville," greeted Viviena, "Eleanor is about somewhere. I'll tell her you're here."

"Thanks, but you need not bother," he protested, scowling at the grinning Jocoso.

"It's no trouble," insisted the widow and, with a word of excuse, she left the men to themselves.

Granville paused, in the ceremony of dusting his sober corduroys with his black sombrero, to ask Jocoso what in the devil he was doing in San Gabriel.

"I come accounth I please, Señor Busybody," retorted the lieutenant with impudence.

"Rather odd for a Mexican officer to be dangling about a revolutionary hot-bed," commented Granville, taking possession of the chair by the fireplace.

"My orders do not make conflict with my discretion."

"Orders!" echoed the American sarcastically, running his fingers through his long black hair; "you'll be taking them from the widow."

Jocoso snapped his teeth. "She order my

heart, *si!* I got no modesty 'bout him. She know me — Mexicano!" He slapped his scarlet covered breast by way of emphasis, and added, "But you, with Mexicano back and Americano front — a e-spy!"

"Here, here," interposed the other quietly, "don't crowd me. I'll have that uniform stripped off your back before you can twist your moustache."

"You think I 'fraid?" bristled the Mexican. "Well, maybe, great pleasure you do that."

"Anyway, for the time, you take orders from me."

"I hear that before, Señor *Colonel.*"

Granville's small gray eyes flashed, his thin lip quivered under the drooping moustache, he rose abruptly and faced Jocoso. "I've told you to drop the 'Colonel' here," said he with unexpected control. "It's enough for *you* to know that I hold a commission in the Mexican army."

The lieutenant looked contemptuously at his superior officer and sniffed, "Who's 'fraid now?"

Far from taking any offense at this, Granville laughed, for sometimes Jocoso amused him. "It's a matter of discretion," he explained.

"Sham! That is what! Ah, make me sick: my commission, General Castro, you, whole beezness — all — sham!" The Mexican hurled this in the American's face. "And you — greatest sham of all. You come here, you say, 'My Americano heart for little Señorita Eleanor!' You go to Mexicano General Castro, you say, 'My heart with Mexicanos, I help chase Americanos away for the reward of many ranchos; I e-spy, tell all Americanos do. Give me Jocoso and regiment!' *Si, Si!* You like pup-dog what bit his own mother. *Impio!*"

Granville listened as though it were an old story to him. "Well, why don't you betray me here?" he inquired.

"Then I be that same pup as you. *Carajo!* I *soldado* — have order. I obey so long I can. But you leave my personality alone. I loaf make where I please myself."

Granville gathered up the tails of his long frock coat, sat down, stretched out his lanky figure, crossed his boots, half squinted through his gray eyes, and smiled languidly at Jocoso. For a time the silence was broken only by the clank of the Mexican's sword and the jingle of his spurs, as he paced the tiles impatiently. The American had no fear that Jocoso would betray him, knowing that obedience to military command was a sort of religion to the young officer.

Granville's secret commission as Jocoso's colonel enabled him to rule at the presidio and at the same time to profess a common interest with his countrymen in the cause of the revolution. He took care to establish a friendly relationship with the padre, since he entertained a passion for El-

eanor Brinton. It was Granville's purpose, once he had won her, to exact from the Mexican government allotment of certain acres of the mission estate, which adjoined his own ranch, as payment for services rendered in raids against certain settlements some years before, and for information, now daily furnished, regarding the revolutionary movement. His business at the mission, therefore, was of a manifold nature. He came both as a spy and as a wooer.

It was the lover who was annoyed by the presence of Jocoso. He presently tilted up a sharp, inquisitive nose, stroked his drooping moustache, and inquired with a drawl, "How soon are you going, Jocoso?"

"I stay a long time yet. You want to loaf make to Señorita Eleanor — deceive her!" Jocoso paused by the renegade's chair. "Accounth that I hate complexion of you." He spat on the floor to show his contempt.

"Virtue isn't a matter of complexion," drawled the other.

"No," retorted Jocoso, "it is a matter of soul. You have no got him."

The door through which the widow had retreated, was now opened and a woman paused upon the threshold, bearing high a candle. Its rays fell obliquely upon her forehead. To the lieutenant, who regarded her as a being little less than spiritual, the light appeared to encircle her dark hair with a halo; but to Granville, who looked upon her with the primitive longing of man for mate, the light struck upon the rose, set above her brow, as a challenge to love.

In contrast to the widow, who stood at her shoulder, Eleanor Brinton indeed seemed almost ethereal, just as a rose might look a saint beside a flaming poppy; but the close observer would not have failed to perceive that, despite her serenity of feature and manner, the ward of the old padre of

San Gabriel entertained an ardent disposition that might no more be commanded than the flushes of her cheeks.

She was quick to comprehend the belligerent attitude of the guests and, advancing into the room, exclaimed, "War in miniature! Peace, Señors! You know San Gabriel is neutral ground."

Granville arose hastily. "Permit me, Eleanor," said he, relieving her of the candle and offering her a chair; while Jocoso, bowing with extravagant ceremony, murmured, "*Muchas excusas,* Señorita!"

Eleanor looked from one to the other, threatening them humorously. "Come now," she resumed, "what is the quarrel? Confess!"

"Only a matter of souls, *amiguita mia,*" answered the Mexican.

"He means boot-leather," put in Viviena, who had possessed herself of Granville's seat by the

hearth; "that's the only sort of souls that come out of Mexico."

"I think better of you than that, Señor," championed Eleanor, turning to a window, whither Granville followed her.

Jocoso, without encouragement, drew a stool close to the widow and essayed a confidential tirade on the subject of souls. At the same time, Granville, with elephantine dexterity, sought to possess himself of the rose, which was Eleanor's ornament.

"No, no," she objected, laughing and holding him off; "it looks very well where it is!"

"Yes," growled he, "but you might!"

"What are you two making such a rumpus about?" inquired Viviena.

Granville, with an injured air, replied, "I ask for a rose and she —"

"Laughs! Hah, hah!" interjected Jocoso with malice. "She keep *la rosa* for some other señor."

"THE PAGE OF DESTINY"

CHAPTER III

"THE PAGE OF DESTINY"

AS the Padre Reinaldo trended his way through the San Gabriel garden, which was heavy with the scent of roses and flowered musk, he heard laughter and surmised that Jocoso was within the mission. The priest smiled at the thought and, hastily crossing the veranda, pushed open the door.

"Have you heard," he asked, without preface, addressing himself no more to one than to the others; "that there's been a highway robbery?"

"Any one hurt?" inquired Eleanor, leading the padre to a seat by the window.

The old man took his ward's hand and drew her close to him, saying, "No, no, my dear, it was most politely done!"

"Then it must have been the work of Captain Courtesy," she exclaimed.

The priest complimented her sagacity and, in reply to a question from Granville, informed him that the victim of the road-agent was a Mexican courier on his way to Castro with gold and despatches.

At that Jocoso started up from his seat, like a jack-in-the-box, exclaiming, "H-a-a-h!"

"There's work for you, Jocoso," remarked Granville. Whereupon, the widow laughed mockingly. Jocoso turned upon her in anger.

"Mucho amuse you!" he cried. "El Capitán Cortesia laugh also when my regimento catch him." He tightened his belt with a great show of determination.

"Your regiment hasn't gumption enough to catch a hedgehog," returned Viviena merrily.

"Wait! I take him myself!"

Granville patted the Mexican on the shoulder.

"There's five thousand dollars' reward for Courtesy, dead or alive; and I'll double it."

Eleanor stared at the speaker in amazement. "Why, George — what makes you so anxious?" she gasped.

"He's a road-agent; an outlaw; he fears nothing; respects no one!"

"But women!" put in the padre.

"And Americans," added the widow.

Granville laughed at this and said, "Yes, I've heard that he robs no one but Mexicans."

"And I believe that is true," added the old man. He arose, as he spoke, and, going to the cupboard over the fireplace, began collecting paper, ink and quills. This was a sign which Viviena respected and hastened to go.

"I must be up early tomorrow; we're making wine," said she, as she kissed Eleanor.

"*Buenas noches*, my little ranchera," called the padre over his shoulder.

"I go to catch el Capitán Cortesia," boasted Jocoso. Then, offering his arm to Viviena he inquired, "Also possibly I have the pleasure to conduct you, Señora, across the garden?" She accepted his arm and they went out together.

Granville lingered with the hope of another word with Eleanor, who was now engaged in making the padre a quill. The priest, observing him, returned to the subject of the highwayman and suggested that he was ready to believe that Courtesy was most generous.

"He can afford to be," retorted the American, "with other folk's money."

The old man tested the point on his thumbnail. "I understand that all he takes from the Mexican purse he gives to the aid of California arms."

"A patriot road-agent!" Granville was sarcastic.

Eleanor shook her head, and remarked, "I can scarcely credit it. He is a highwayman by trade."

Then, after a pause, she added, "I wonder what he's like!"

"I met him once," announced Granville and, amused at the sensation this statement provoked, he went on to say: "It was at San Buenaventura last fall — the time of the carnival. A dance was in progress at the alcalde's. It was a masked affair, so I fancy that in mere bravado Courtesy betrayed himself. You will wonder that he was not captured; but you might trust him to plan well. They all but had him, when he escaped through a window. It was night. I had just entered the patio and, seeing this man spring from a balcony above me, I caught him. In the struggle I tore off his mask. The moonlight shone directly in his face. I shall never forget it. That moment I was knocked down. I heard a whistle, the gallop of hoofs — he was gone." Granville stopped for an instant and then added impressively, "I fancy I am the only man in these parts who

has had the honor of seeing the face of this famous highwayman, at the same time knowing him to be Captain Courtesy. There is nothing particular to mark him from other men, though I should know him among thousands."

They became silent. Eleanor went to a window, threw it open and looked out into the night. It was calm and cool. A light breeze fanned her face with the perfume of verbena, roses, and musk, and stirred the foliage of a great pepper-tree over which the new moon peeped at her curiously. Granville took a step toward her but she turned abruptly from the window and asked the padre if he knew where the courier had been waylaid.

" On the Pasadena road," answered the old man.

With an exclamation of alarm, Eleanor hastened into the kitchen and roused Gray Feather, an Indian girl, one of the neophytes still remaining at the mission, and asked her if Tim Burke, a protégé of the padre, had returned from his journey.

The Indian girl shook her pretty head and replied, "No, Señor-ita!"

"Be sure to let me know the moment he comes," admonished Eleanor.

"What are you so nervous about?" queried Granville, when she had returned to the window.

"It's Tim," she explained; "I'm afraid he may meet Captain Courtesy."

"What if he does?"

The padre was now busily writing at the table. Eleanor went to him and laid her hands on his shoulders. "George wants to know about Tim," said she.

"Tim," echoed the old man; "oh, there's no harm in telling the Señor, since he is one of us, that Tim is returning tonight from Pasadena with money collected there for the purchase of arms and ammunition for our riflemen."

Luckily for Granville, the appearance of Gray Feather, with the announcement that Tim was then

stabling his horse, attracted the attention of Eleanor; otherwise she must have noted the malevolent look which this news brought to his face.

Tim Burke himself, a sandy-haired youth, employed at the mission in the capacity of general utility man, followed hard upon the heels of his herald. His big sombrero, leathern-jacket and trousers — the latter knotted with a thong below his knees — were coated with dust. He strode buoyantly to the table and set down a pair of saddle-bags. "Good evenin'," he said, with just the scintillation of a brogue.

"Oh, Tim," cried Eleanor with relief, "we've been so worried about you; what kept you?"

"No adventure, I'm sure," put in Granville.

"No adventure," exclaimed the young Irishman; "Hah! Faith, an' what d' ye call this?" He illustrated the movement of a rider jogging peacefully along the highway. "Then th' trail as black as th' divil's own face — askin' yer riverence's pardon

— then — road-agent!" He dramatized a highway robbery.

Without waiting to answer any one of the questions, hurled at him in surprise or trepidation, Tim went on in his own way: "'Pardon, Señor,' says th' road-agent; 'an' yer saddle-bags!' Well, ye may know I thought th' soles would drop off my boots. Holy frost! What could th' likes o' me do, with that gun starin' me in th' eyes, but give up th' saddle-bags? But as I handed 'em over, I says:

"'Señor Road-agent, if ye had th' sand of a galoot, ye wouldn't touch 'em!'

"'Why not?' says he.

"'Because,' says I, 'that money 's t' buy powder an' ball t' blow thim greasers off th' premises.'

"'Ho, ho,' says he, laughin' fit t' bust, 'ye're somethin' of a patriot, yerself!'

"An' be Ol' Nick — long life to him — he chucks th' bags back t' me.

" ' They be yers,' says he, ' an' here's a donation t' boot.'

" Then he give me a bag o' gold an' a package. Says he, ' I took 'em off th' *Mexican courier, meself!* ' "

" Castro's courier? " ejaculated the amazed Granville, while Eleanor and the padre gazed at Tim in wonderment.

" Sure," rejoined the youth. " Says th' road-agent, ' They were intinded for his Excellency. Prisint thim t' th' Americans with th' compliments of Cap'n Courtesy! ' An' before I could thank him, he was off like a thistle."

" It's almost incredible," spoke up the padre.

" Here's th' proof of it," laughed Tim, ripping open the saddle pouches and flinging on the table three bags of coin and a slim packet tied in oil-skin.

Granville reached eagerly for the packet, but the old man was quicker than he.

" Pardon me, Señor," said he, examining the pa-

pers. "Hum, a document in cypher, addressed to Castro. I shall forward it tomorrow to Dr. Semple at Ranchito. As a leader of our revolution, he will best know what to do with it."

"And this gold?" questioned Granville.

"Part of it, at least," said Eleanor, "is ours."

"Seein' how Cap'n Courtesy give it to us, Señorita, it's all ours," insisted Tim.

The padre considered for a moment and then observed, "No, it is not; but this is war. We can justly consider these the spoils." He gathered up bags and packet and, motioning to Tim, went to the fireplace. "Señor Granville, can I trouble you to give Tim a lift with the hearthstone?" he asked; "I'll put the bags and papers there till morning."

With some little effort they raised the stone and concealed the gold and dispatches in a crevice under it.

"There! They are safe," observed the old man.

"Perfectly safe," added Granville, smiling sig-

nificantly under the screen of his moustache; and, with a nod to the padre, a low bow over Eleanor's hand, a glance of stealth at the window and another at the hearth, he picked up his sombrero and bade them good-night.

"STRAINS THAT MIGHT CREATE A SOUL"

CHAPTER IV

"STRAINS THAT MIGHT CREATE A SOUL"

THE wind was rising. It blew open a mission window. The padre turned from the door, where he had just bidden Granville good-night, and fastened a bolt on the casement. He stopped for an instant, looking out at the stars, and thought a prayer for the soul of Captain Courtesy. Presently he took a seat at the table and dipped his quill in the ink. He dipped again and again, without making a mark on the paper, after the manner of one whose thoughts are far from the work in hand. He glanced over at his ward, who was seated idly at the hearth, staring at the glowing embers.

"Señor Granville seems to be quite fond of you," ventured the padre.

"What?" she asked absently; "oh, yes, yes!"

"You care less for him than you did?"

"I don't know," she replied vaguely.

The priest smiled and fell to thinking again. "Captain Courtesy has much that is good in him," he remarked after a long silence.

"Good?" rejoined Eleanor; "you refer to his manners?"

"No — to the man."

"Because he respects women, Padre?"

"In part, my dear, but more that he has courage."

"Is it brave to waylay men at night?"

"I'm not upholding his methods, but you must remember, Eleanor, that long before our revolution shaped itself, Courtesy carried on his solitary warfare against all Mexico."

"But you must own, Padre, that his life is entirely wrong."

"I had rather say — misused."

"Oh, he probably thinks he is quite in the right," said Eleanor, stirring up the coals and laying a fresh log on the embers.

"That is just it, daughter."

"Do you believe," she asked, "that, if he had one to teach him the truth, he might abandon the highway?"

"I think that possible," returned the old man, "for 'deep in each soul dwells a noble spark.'"

They became silent again. The padre was writing: "In danger of eternal damnation." He looked up and, after consideration, muttered, "No, that was meant for Castro!" With a sudden movement he arose, tore up the paper, and cast the fragments into the fire.

"What are you doing, Padre?"

"I am going to write a new sermon," he answered gravely, "as though I were addressing Captain Courtesy. The world is full of such men — only less bold than he. My text shall be — eh — let

me see! Ah, I have it! . . . No! . . . Hum! . . . Ah! . . . Here: 'All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.' "

"But your text is incomplete," complained Eleanor; "you forget the preceding verse: 'But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.' "

The padre laid his hands on her arms, stooped and kissed her brow. "Yes, yes, dear child . . . if he but knew. . . . Your verse shall be my theme."

"Weave it into a melody, Padre." As she spoke Eleanor took from a cupboard-shelf a violin and bow and placed them in the good father's hands. He smiled his acquiescence, settled himself in the chair by the fireside, and fell to tuning his instru-

ment, while Eleanor chose a low stool and placed herself with childlike reverence at his feet, where she might still watch the nodding of the flames.

The padre drew his bow across the strings. The instrument sighed. The brightness of the old man's soul shone in his eyes and Eleanor heard the voice of that soul in the song of the violin.

There came a knock at the door, yet neither he who wove the song nor she who harkened unto it heard the summons. Again there came a knock and again. Still was it unheeded, for musician and listener, enrapt in melody, had no ears for a call from the world.

The door opened. A man stood upon the threshold. He was tall and rather slim, although there was no mistaking the brawn in his well-modeled shoulders and lithe limbs, which his tight-fitting deer-skin tunic and breeches showed to advantage. His features were almost classic in form and the deep tan of his face contrasted oddly with

blue eyes and brown hair. He was, perhaps, a trifle under thirty. Although he appeared calm, he was breathing heavily and, from the lather which splattered his military boots, one might have fancied that he had ridden far and fast.

He stood in the doorway unseen, one hand on the latch, the other holding his sombrero, deeply impressed by the music and the unconscious picture which the padre and his ward composed by the fireside. The old man, in long gray frock and cowl, lay back in his chair, the violin tucked lovingly under his chin, his eyes closed, his arm swaying rhythmically as he bowed. Eleanor, with elbow resting on the padre's knee, presented to the intruder only a bit of cheek and throat, rose-tinted in the firelight; but there was something in the poise of her head, the suppleness of her figure, clothed in some soft white material, which charmed him more than music or tableau.

The song of the violin grew fainter, then hushed,

The Song of the Violin Grew Fainter

fading away into a sigh. The visitant too sighed. They at the fire turned and, startled at the presence of a stranger, arose abruptly.

"I beg your pardon, Padre," began the intruder.

"I pray you enter, Señor," said the old man, advancing with a cordial air.

The newcomer closed the door and took the hand the priest offered, saying, "I knocked several times. You did not hear. I took the liberty of entering."

"You are welcome!"

"*Gracias*, Padre! My name is Davis — Leonardo Davis, of San Pedro."

With a quaint show of pride, the padre presented Eleanor and introduced himself. Just then the rumble of a troop of horse attracted their attention. With a common impulse all went to the window.

"Probably Jocoso's troop," commented the old man.

"They're riding like mad," added Eleanor.

"I should explain," volunteered the stranger, "that my mare has gone lame. I beg your hospitality for the night, Padre."

"Such poor entertainment as we can offer is yours, Señor. I will see to your mare." With that the good father took a candle and made for the kitchen.

"I fear I am putting you to a great deal of trouble," remarked the guest.

The padre shook his head. "The mission is not as it was in the old days, but strangers are welcome as ever they were. You have made us happy in your coming, Señor."

"TELL ME, WHERE IS FANCY BRED?"

CHAPTER V

"TELL ME, WHERE IS FANCY BRED?"

HEN the door closed behind the padre, the stranger looked at Eleanor curiously for a moment and then remarked, "I am wondering, Señorita, whether your memory is as good as mine."

She scrutinized him in turn but, as he stood well back from the fireplace, she could not clearly distinguish his features. She hesitated, then impulsively caught up a candle, held it high and at arm's length, so that the light of it fell upon the visitor's face. It was a countenance to inspire confidence. Frank, fearless, smiling eyes challenged hers.

"You — you are he who befriended me," she exclaimed in amazement, and, holding out a hand to him, continued, "But you are so changed."

"Oh," returned the other humorously, "I have shaved my ferocious moustache."

"Yes, yes, of course! And, Señor, please remember that I saw you only for a moment!"

"You have not forgotten our meeting! I am hugely flattered, Señorita." He bowed, with his hand over his heart.

"It is more than you merit," she chided, setting the candle on the table, "seeing that you gave me no chance to thank you."

The stranger smiled. "I assure you," said he, "that I deserve no thanks for whipping a greaser. I had rather do that than eat, drink, or sleep. I cannot imagine a paradise without Mexicans to thrash."

"You left me very abruptly," Eleanor complained.

"That was the fault of Paquita."

"Paquita?"

"My mare," he explained. "She ran away

with me. She adores Mexicans — as I do. You remember her?"

Eleanor confessed that she did not.

"Forget Paquita; forget me!" Whereupon he threw open a window and gave a peculiar whistle. "No matter where she is, she'll answer that," he observed. "I'll present her." He leaned out of the window and called quietly, "Ho, girl!" There came an answering neigh. He called again, almost in a whisper. Then a mare thrust her black muzzle in at the casement and nosed the hand held out to her.

"*Bonita Señorita Paquita!*" announced the stranger with mock ceremony. "Isn't she a beauty?" Paquita playfully snapped at her master and laid her head across his shoulder, which was her way of begging a caress.

"I don't wonder that you adore her," exclaimed Eleanor enthusiastically. With a pretty gesture she took the rose from her hair and was about to

place it in Paquita's bridle, when her companion asked:

"For Paquita, or me?"

Rather startled by his assurance, she made no reply; neither did she resist as he gently drew the rose from her fingers. This bit of pantomime was observed by Jocoso, who, entering slyly, did not proclaim his presence until the guest had fastened the flower in his tunic.

"*Muchas excusas,* Señorita," he chirped; "I made quick return for Señor Granville! Affair most important!"

Rather embarrassed by the Mexican's sudden appearance, Eleanor stammered something to the effect that Granville had gone a half hour ago; while the man at the window, giving Paquita a caress, waved her from the casement.

"Señor Granville has gone without *la rosa,*" grinned Jocoso. "Hah, ho, mucho amuse, when I tell him."

Ignoring this remark, Eleanor presented Jocoso to the stranger.

"Ah, excusa I come in so — so impetuously," said the lieutenant. "My regimento just capture desperado el Capitán Cortesia."

"You surprise me," observed the visitant.

The Mexican plumed himself, saying, "*Si, si,* Señor; mucho honor."

"Are you quite sure you have him?" queried the stranger.

Jocoso was positive. "Of course he say, "*No, no,* I no am el desperado.' That sure I may be, I make quick return for Señor Granville. He know."

"You'll likely find him at the ranch," suggested Eleanor.

"Ah, maybe! *Buenas noches,* Señor!" The lieutenant saluted the visitor, and, plucking Eleanor by the sleeve, whispered roguishly, "*La rosa* mucho amuse. I make discovery of him to Señor

Granville. Ho, ho!" With that, he hastened away.

"May I ask who is Señor Granville?" inquired the guest.

"He is from the States. His ranch is close to the mission. You know we have quite a little American settlement here." As Eleanor spoke, the priest came in from the kitchen. "Padre," said the maid, "you cannot fancy who this señor is."

The old man looked from one to the other with sparkling eyes. "You have discovered that you are cousins already?" he asked.

"Better," put in the stranger, "we are old friends."

"It was he who protected me from those Mexicans at Los Nietos."

"Then you are doubly welcome, Señor," supplemented the priest.

At that moment Tim, bringing in the guest's saddle-bags, volunteered the information that his

friend, Muscado of the presidio, had come from assisting in the taking of Captain Courtesy.

"Captured at last!" mused the old man. "I'm sorry to hear that," he added, possessing himself of the huge chair by the fire.

Tim retired to the kitchen and a brief period of silence ensued. Eleanor resumed her place at the padre's feet, while the newcomer took a stool in the shadow, on the edge of the hearth, and squared his shoulders against the wall. From this vantage point he presently remarked, "Padre, you seem to think well of this — eh — Courtesy!"

The good father stroked his smooth-shaven chin reflectively and answered, "Well enough to admire him, despite his grievous sins."

"Then you consider him a great sinner?" There was a note of surprise in the stranger's voice.

"To be sure," interposed Eleanor.

"Do you know of his services in the cause of our revolution, Señorita?"

"Yes," she replied, "but we think he might find an honest way to serve his country."

"If all the Americans in California took the highway against Mexico, as Courtesy has, we would be assured of victory," retorted the visitor warmly.

"There is something in that," admitted the padre.

Eleanor laid her hand affectionately on the old man's arm and said, "Ah, the dear padre loves a great sinner."

"I have precedent for that, daughter: 'All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.'"

"If the wicked turn from his sins — repent — reform!"

The priest pressed her hand, by way of reply, arose, and began sorting his papers at the table. When he had gathered them and placed them in the cupboard, and while he turned to bolt the outer

door, the guest inquired humorously of Eleanor, "I wonder if you would care to undertake the reformation of Courtesy?"

"I do not think so, Señor. I doubt if I could do much with such a —"

"Desperate man?" he suggested.

"Thank you," she smiled; "I might have said something worse."

"He's probably not such a devil of a fellow after all. I fancy that, for the sake of a woman, he might do a great deal. They say he's quite civil to your sex."

"Señor, he's afraid of them!"

"I understand now: that's why he has never robbed a woman," chuckled the guest.

The padre, having closed the mission for the night, lighted another candle and addressed himself to the stranger: "Pardon, Señor," said he, "but if you will permit, I will show you to my room."

"*Your* room?" ejaculated the other.

The old man was embarrassed at what he considered a blunder and hastened to explain that the mission was half in ruins, that there were few rooms fit for habitation, and that he would be obliged to offer his own.

"No, no, Padre," objected the stranger; "I could not think of depriving you of your bed. Permit me to sleep on the bench — there!" He waved his hand toward a long settee which stood against the further wall.

"But, Señor, you are my guest. That would be poor hospitality."

The guest, however, was insistent. "Really," he said, "I prefer this arrangement, if you will be so kind. Otherwise you will drive me away."

The old man reluctantly acquiesced. "God bless you and keep you through the night, Señor!" With this benediction, he motioned Eleanor to follow him and lighted the way to their chambers.

"Good-night," said Eleanor, and she offered the

visitant her hand. He touched her fingers and murmured, "*Buenas noches,* Señorita."

For some little time, the stranger stood looking at the door through which Eleanor had vanished; then, with a deep breath, he wheeled about to the table upon which burned a solitary candle. He picked up the dip and inspected his domicile. That done, he threw a fresh log on the fire, drew a chair up to the hearth and mechanically filled a black pipe and lighted it.

"Snug here," he murmured. For a half hour he smoked contentedly. At last, with a yawn, he knocked the ashes from his pipe and prepared to make his bed on the settee. He doubled up his saddle-bags, from which the butt of a pistol asserted itself, as the foundation for a pillow, and flung his tunic over them. The rose, which had been secured in a leathern loop, fell to the tiles. He caught it up from the floor, regarded it whimsically and, with a stealthy action, as though he feared detec-

tion, wrapped the flower in a kerchief and tucked it in his shirt. Whereupon he laughed sheepishly and began pulling off his boots — first the left, then the right. The latter he held for at least a quarter of an hour, staring blindly at the floor. Presently the boot slipped from his hands.

"What am I dreaming about?" he exclaimed, starting to his feet and going to the table, where he picked up the snuffer and extinguished the candle.

The room was now dark, save for a patch of light cast across the hearthstone. The stranger tossed another log on the coals, moved slowly to the settee, and lay down to dream of a vast garden of roses wherein every flower bore the upturned face of the ward of the padre of San Gabriel.

"WHILE NIGHT'S BLACK
AGENTS TO THEIR
PREYS DO ROUSE"

CHAPTER VI

"WHILE NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS TO THEIR PREYS DO ROUSE"

AS George Granville, under the escort of Lieutenant Jocoso, passed the mission on his way to the presidio — whither he was bound to identify the captured highwayman — he noted with satisfaction that San Gabriel was dark.

"Make haste," he cried impatiently to the Mexican, who was lagging behind, "I've other business tonight." He laid his whip over his horse's flanks and in a few minutes beheld the light of the presidio.

The news of the capture of Captain Courtesy had spread rapidly, so that Granville, when he drew up at the old adobe barracks, which housed

Jocoso's regiment, found a crowd of men and women gathered about the door, eager for a glimpse of the notorious road-agent. Granville dismounted, called to a Mexican to hold his bridle, and unceremoniously pushed his way through the throng with Jocoso at his heels.

"Where's your prisoner?" asked the American.

"Here, Señor," replied Jocoso, piloting his companion into a bare room, where a half-dozen men in soiled uniforms stood guard over a muscular-looking frontiersman, who was bound securely to a stone bench.

Granville glared at the man for an instant and then turned on Jocoso with a curse. "You blundering idiot," he exclaimed, "that's no more Captain Courtesy than I am."

The prisoner grinned. "Just what I've been tryin' to tell these greasers," he drawled; "but 'twarn't any use. They picked me up 'bout a mile back on th' Pasadena trail, near whar they said th'

courier was held up. It ain't safe t' let these ir-re-spon-si-ble young fellers go loose at night. Sometime they'll be took serious an' be lugged home perforated. I'd be 'bliged, Señor, if you'd cut these ropes; I ain't just com-fort-able."

Granville gave the order, and the frontiersman, released, stalked out of the presidio, and told the crowd with great gusto of Jocoso's discomfiture. Then he hunted up his mustang and resumed the trail to Pasadena.

The gathering had disintegrated when Granville, unaccompanied, descended the presidio steps and called brusquely to a Mexican to bring up his horse. In an ill-humor, then, he swung himself into the saddle and cantered off in the direction of San Gabriel.

As he rode, he noted that a wonderful change was taking place in the aspect of the night. The opaque clouds which had completely canopied the sky were rent here and there by a fresh wind that

came from over the sea, and through the openings the stars shone faintly, like lamps in distant windows. A cottonwood copse shut out the light again for a moment, but, when he emerged from the shadows, he found the night had grown brighter still: the belated moon was coquettishly bobbing over a row of gnarled willows that stood guard over the creek, called the San Gabriel River.

The moon seemed to precede him and, travelling clear of the scudding clouds, it picked out the mission tower and its six arches. So clear was the night now that, had he cared to observe, he might have seen that two of the upper tower arches were empty, while in each of the others hung a bell, awaiting but the tug of a rope to give voice to the chimes which had contributed not a little to the fame of the Mission of San Gabriel.

Drawing near, the rider pulled up his horse and surveyed the mission thoughtfully. Finally his glance fell upon a stone stairway, set against the

chapel wall, which offered access to a choir loft. He turned toward it, dismounted, and tied his horse under a pepper-tree. Then he climbed the steps and essayed to open the choir loft door. Failing in that, he descended, walked along the foot of the buttresses, past the bell-tower and, pausing before a window in the priest's house, took to studying its fastenings. Presently his hand went down into his boot, a steel instrument shimmered in the moonlight, the window frames creaked and, yielding to pressure, sprang open.

Granville looked within. A fire fitfully split the darkness on one side of the room so that there was just light enough for him vaguely to make out the forms of chairs and table within a small radius, but beyond that he could distinguish nothing. A dozen men might have lurked there unseen.

For an instant he stood listening. He fancied he heard a noise like the click of a latch. Concluding, however, that he was mistaken, he climbed over

the sill and dropped lightly on the floor. He went directly to the fireplace and, dropping on one knee, inserted a heavy hunting knife between tile and hearthstone. Using the implement as a lever, he raised the flag a half-inch or so, and then attempted to lift it with his fingers. It was heavy and his grip was insecure. The stone slipped from his grasp and dropped back into place.

Granville darted to the window, flung a leg over the sill, ready to decamp at the first hint of an alarm. He sat there awhile, listening intently. It was so still that he heard the drumming of his own pulse. Clearly there was nothing to fear. He returned to the fireplace and set about raising the flag again.

His next attempt was more successful. Holding up the hearthstone with one hand, he reached under it with the other, dragged out a leathern bag, and deposited it in the shadow behind him. As he drew forth its mate, he again lost his grip and the

flag fell, buffered by the second bag, with a muffled thud.

"You're very clumsy!"

This terse comment startled Granville with all the shock of an explosion, and he recoiled as though the shock had been accompanied by a blow. Then, quickly recovering himself, he snatched up his knife and sprang toward a figure silhouetted against the window.

"Drop that tool!"

At this command, Granville, catching the glint of a pistol barrel, lowered his arm and tossed his weapon on the table.

"Well, what now?" he asked, with an attempt at indifference.

"Put back those bags," was the answer.

Granville took both hands to the flag. "You'll have to give me a lift," said he.

The other took a step toward the fireplace, keeping out of the light, and kicked the bags under the

stone. At the same instant Granville released his hold and struck at his captor. There was a scuffle, a groan, and Granville sank on his knees by the hearth — a hand at his throat, a pistol at his temple.

A gust from the window fanned the fire. A flame danced high, casting a bright light upon the features of the stranger.

"Great G-o-d!" cried Granville in amazement; "Captain Courtesy!"

"Good of you to remember me," returned the outlaw laconically.

"IT BEHOOVES YOU, THEN, TO PLY YOUR FINEST ART"

CHAPTER VII

"IT BEHOOVES YOU, THEN, TO PLY YOUR FINEST ART"

NIGHT began to pale. A mist appeared upon the horizon and spread rapidly over the sky. It was as though some one were opening a huge fan of cold filmy gray. A fresh wind coursed down the San Gabriel valley, gathering the chill of many dews as it sped. It worried the trees, starting birds from their roosts; it ruffled the easy-going creek until its banks were margined with foam; it struck across the green pastures where the sheep huddled for warmth; then whirled toward the mission, buffeting a horse that had stood patiently through the night beneath a pepper-tree, and blew in at an open window where two men sat facing each other across a table.

They felt the chill of the wind and shivered. The fire had long since burned out and they were stiff, heavy-eyed, and weary with a long, strange vigil.

"When are you going to conclude this farce?" asked one; "I'd like to go home to bed. It's almost day-break."

"Señor Granville," replied the other, shifting a pistol from his left to his right hand and keeping the muzzle pointed toward his companion, "you may go when you pledge your word that you'll not betray my identity until sunset."

"And give you a whole day to make love to the padre's ward!"

"So that's the way of it. Our friend Jocoso has been carrying tales. Well?" The speaker leaned back in his chair and yawned.

"I'll compromise," volunteered Granville. "If you'll leave here immediately, I will keep silent, Señor Road-agent."

"When Are You Going to Conclude This Farce?"

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"Road-agent? Eh! Thief has caught thief," laughed the highwayman.

"Do you accept my offer?"

"No," rejoined the other, emphatically. "This is final. Look!" He pointed through the casement. A pale orange tint streaked the horizon. "In a few moments," he continued, "the sun will strike the window. Then, if you have not pledged me your word of honor that I may stay here, unknown as Captain Courtesy, until the angelus, I shall kill you."

Granville stroked his moustache nervously. He hesitated to yield the point, though it was quite within the prospect of his belief that the captain would make good the threat. Throughout the night, decision and irresolution had ebbed and flowed in his mind. There might be no significance in the gift of a rose, yet she had refused it to him and bestowed it upon this highwayman, who — in a day, for all he knew — might outstrip his court-

ship of months. But this rival was an outlaw and, at the latest, must be gone by night. What fear then? Eleanor would not entertain for even a moment the thought of such a one as Captain Courtesy. The road-agent would go his way and be forgot. How childish it was to hold out against the man's one stipulation! Ah, but what did the captain mean by it? He was resourceful. The very fact that, when hard pressed, he had sought shelter in so unlikely a place as the mission was evidence of his cleverness. Had he not, perhaps, formed some cunning project to make way with Eleanor? A man possessing the effrontery to rob Castro and his escort in broad daylight, would make little of abducting a woman from under the nose of a dozen priests. Nothing would be sacred to him.

Then an easy solution, which he had early entertained and rejected a dozen times, reappealed to him. He would pledge his word, as was demanded

of him, and break it at will. Perhaps that were the best way, but would it not bring the man's vengeance instantly upon him? Or should he escape that, for the time, would he not live thereafter in constant terror of his life? Already, on another account — unknown to the captain — he held the highwayman in dread and he had no wish to add to the heavy score which stood against him. But, remembering Eleanor, dared he yield?

Jealousy is a terrible spur to the imagination. It goaded Granville's fancy the night long. It drove him, at times, to the brink of insanity, when a scarlet film seemed to blur his sight; and only the heavy oak table, an effective barrier, balked his design to brave the highwayman's pistol and seek deliverance with a knife thrust. And now, at the sill of the morning, and death within a moment's overtaking, he was still irresolute.

The captain was re-examining the priming of his pistol. "I repeat," said he complacently, "that I

shall shoot the instant that the sun lights the window." He paused, smiled grimly, and went on in a tone of quiet determination: "I might make a very pretty yarn of the thief who came in the night to rob the home of the woman, whom — I fancy — he professes to adore. I never killed a man in cold blood, but my only regret would be that you were not a Mexican."

Granville turned his eyes to the window. The sun was preparing to rise regally. The steel-gray screen in the east became a canopy of rose-colored silk; the orange band on the fringe of the landscape became a pathway of golden cloth. Framed by the casement, the scene looked like the work of a Japanese artist.

The silence was becoming oppressive, when suddenly it was disturbed. This disturbance was scarcely greater than that which may be made by a leaf falling upon the still surface of a pool, yet the captain was aware that a door was gently

opened behind him. Intuitively he knew that the intruder was Eleanor.

Granville started in his chair. The sun swamped the window ledge.

Courtesy, unmindful of Granville's look of amazement and as though unconscious of a third presence, calmly presented the pistol — butt foremost — to his enemy, remarking, "A very pretty gun, Señor Granville. I should be glad to own one like it."

Granville, stunned for an instant, both by the apparition at the door and the astonishing action of the highwayman, accepted the weapon mutely; then, recovering his poise, arose and advanced to Eleanor with a mumbled word of apology.

The captain, too, with a show of wonder, sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "Señorita Brinton!" and hurriedly slipped into his tunic and pulled on his boots.

The young woman regarded them with an air of

bewilderment. "How strange," she stammered; "you — two — so — so early."

"Yes," rejoined Granville, forcing a laugh, "it — it is rather strange, but the fact is —"

"That last night he ran across the trail of Captain Courtesy," put in the highwayman.

"Captain Courtesy?" interrogated Eleanor; "I thought he was taken."

"So did I," added Granville with meaning.

"Well, he escaped," said Courtesy. "The trail ran by here. I was not asleep. I heard the noise of the chase and took a hand."

Granville turned on the captain reprovingly. "If it had not been for you, I should have captured him."

"True," rejoined the highwayman, "but if I had fired I should have hit you, Señor."

"Odd that I heard nothing," mused Eleanor.

"A clear conscience makes a sound sleeper, Señorita," commented the captain.

"He was near by?" she questioned, turning from one to the other with a puzzled look.

"Quite close," responded Granville.

"Captain Courtesy seems to have a knack of getting out of tight places."

"I should say, Señorita, that it was his specialty," declared the outlaw.

"But the day will come when he must pay for his misdeeds," said the girl earnestly, going to the window. "George," she continued, "will you stay to breakfast?"

"Thank you, no! You must excuse me, Eleanor, for being here at this hour, but Señor —"

"Davis," supplied the captain.

"Señor Davis would take me in."

"Oh, I am to blame for keeping him here," said Courtesy.

"It was my pleasure," returned Granville, catching up his sombrero.

"You're coming back this morning, are you not,

George?" Eleanor inquired. "Viviena will be disappointed if you are not here to taste the new wine."

Granville assured her that he would return and, offering his hand to Courtesy, expressed the hope that they might meet again.

The highwayman accepted this friendly overture. "*Gracias,* my friend," said he pleasantly; "but do not put yourself out on my account." Then he flung back the bolts and opened the door with a quaint show of politeness.

"You are safe until the angelus," whispered Granville as he passed out.

Courtesy bowed ceremoniously and murmured, "Your generosity, Señor, is only equalled by your discretion."

"CUPID'S MOST CUNNING NET
IS MADE OF THAT HAIR"

CHAPTER VIII

"CUPID'S MOST CUNNING NET IS MADE OF THAT HAIR"

ELEANOR stood at the window sunning herself, with hands clasped behind her, chin uptilted, and head, at once simple and sovereign in poise, resting lightly against the casement, wholly unconscious of her charming attitude. The wind loosened her blue-black hair and wrapped a scarf about her shoulders.

By candle-light, Courtesy thought her beautiful; by day-light he found her radiant.

He stood a little way from the door, which he had just closed upon Granville, gazing at her with strange and bewildering emotions. A look came into his eyes which was at once tender and happy. He took a step toward her. She looked over her shoulder at him, with a friendly smile, as she said:

"You must be thinking that we rise outrageously early. That's our custom."

"No," he rejoined simply, "I was thinking of my mother."

"Your mother, Señor?" She was interested.

"You recall her image vividly," he went on. "I remember, as a youngster, admiring her as she stood at a window in the sunlight. She was young and lovely and adorable."

Eleanor became confused. She was not proof against such a compliment. A glance assured her that it was ingenuous.

"What — what was your mother like?" she winningly inquired.

"She was a Spaniard, Señorita; a woman of spirit and courage, yet of great tenderness. My father came from the States. They were killed in a raid on the settlement near San Pedro six years ago."

"Ah Señor, these Mexicans have much to answer

for. It may comfort you to know that I lost my parents somewhat as you lost yours."

"Señorita," he exclaimed, with sympathy, holding out his hand to her, "I shall remember that for you."

She impulsively returned his clasp and said, "There are many like us in California. Had it not been for Padre Reinaldo — he was my father's dearest friend — I should have been homeless."

Just then the priest appeared within the doorway. "*Buenos dias,* Señor," was his greeting. "When you have made your toilet, we shall have breakfast." The old man called Tim from the kitchen, and the captain, picking up his saddlebags, followed the lad from the room.

"Daughter," began the padre, when they were alone, "we know nothing of this man — remember that."

"Padre!" she exclaimed in astonishment.

"You understand me."

"But —" she began, appealingly.

A knock at the garden door interrupted her. She raised the latch and admitted a tall Indian. His hair was streaked with gray but he carried himself erect as a youth of twenty.

"Black Moccasin," cried Eleanor. "I didn't expect you until tonight."

"Padre say come with sun," explained the Indian.

The two men shook hands warmly. "The money is there," said the priest, pointing to the hearthstone.

Black Moccasin crossed to the fireplace and raised the flag, while Eleanor lifted the bags and despatches from under it.

"Leave the packet there," enjoined the padre. "I shall send it later to Dr. Semple by Tim."

The old man waited until the papers were replaced and the stone lowered before he added, "Black Moccasin, you are to carry the money to

Captain Brunt, of the California Mounted Riflemen, encamped near San Pedro. When that is done, report to Dr. Semple at Ranchito."

"Go now!" said the Indian, laying his hands on the pouches. As he made for one door, Gray Feather entered by another. Much to his embarrassment, she embraced him.

"Ugh!" he ejaculated, grinning, "Gray Feather like paleface daughter." He looked at her patronizingly, touched her head with a sly caress and turned away. "Go now. Padre ask Great Spirit watch both." So saying, he left his daughter and stalked out in the wake of the priest.

Black Moccasin and a score or so of neophytes, who performed the various labors about the mission, were all that were left of over a thousand Indian converts who had made San Gabriel their home. He had been baptized and married in the chapel and his wife was buried in the little cemetery beside it. This Indian had proved the most

intelligent and trustworthy of the remaining neophytes; so when the padre fell into secret league with the revolutionists, he found him a valuable instrument. Black Moccasin came and went from one rendezvous of the Americans to another, carrying money for arms, orders for leaders, or news of Mexican movements.

Now, as he was telling the padre that Castro was mobilizing troops at Santa Ana, word was brought by an old neophyte that a child was dying in the settlement and that the priest was sent for in haste. Unmindful that he had not broken his fast, the good father bade Black Moccasin God speed and went about his priestly duty.

In the meantime, Eleanor and the captain were seated opposite each other at a table spread with a white cloth and set out with simple fare.

They were alone and — so it seemed to him — in wonderful intimacy. For the first time in their brief acquaintance, he could observe her minutely

without appearing rude. He took advantage of the situation. Her eyes immediately challenged his attention. He began to fancy that they were not brown, as he had supposed, but dark blue. That was because they were shaded with long, dark valances. But when she raised her lashes and met his glance, he was startled to see that they had turned brown again. It was with great interest that he speculated upon this phenomenon.

Presently he made a discovery. Her chin, which he had taken to be perfectly smooth, he now observed was blessed with the merest suggestion of a dimple. He sighed and smiled with appreciation.

From this dimple to her lips was the natural direction of his eyes. There they became fascinated by a quaint little pucker at the corner of her mouth, only to be lured away by the wisp of a curl which was investigating the pink contour of a lovely ear half turned to him. His smile became an expression of affection.

Propinquity, under such circumstances, creates adoration. Yet it never occurred to him that he might be falling in love. His attitude was not introspective. In his mind, self was merely present — not intrusive, and fancy usurped reason. He had long since forgotten that he was at the table. The white cloth had become a cloud and she and he were riding it through Arcadie.

That she divined how it was with him, he might well have surmised had he not been so absorbed in deciding the color of her eyes that he failed to surprise the flushes of her cheeks.

She, who was more practical than he, presently called his attention to the fact that he was tasting nothing. Whereupon he fell to desperately — happy that she should be so interested in his welfare — and poured the cream into the sugar bowl.

Fairly intoxicated, he spread his bread with thin air, and — thinking of her cheeks — asked, "Do you like roses for breakfast?"

"Oh yes," she replied laughing roguishly, "if they are dressed with dew and garnished with moonbeams."

Having recovered his wits for a moment, he laughed with her and, as though in abstraction, picked up her hand, in lieu of a china cup, and held it for an instant. She withdrew it in a panic and inquired seriously, "Do you like coffee in your tea?"

Whereupon he, suppressing a smile, remarked, "I prefer sugar in my coffee."

They laughed freely again, subsiding into silence, and presently, venturing to look up, each surprised the other. To cover her chagrin, she pointed to his tunic, exclaiming, "You — you've lost a button. If — if I can find one to match the others, I'll sew it on — if you like."

He would like it and thanked her. Then he began to laugh. She looked at him inquiringly, hurt. She fancied he was laughing at her. He

understood, begged that she excuse his merriment, and explained.

"Your kind suggestion," he began, "called to mind a yarn I heard of Captain Courtesy and a button, or rather a set of buttons." It was with difficulty that he related the following, so humorously did it appeal to him. "It's most amusing," he resumed with a laugh. "This — eh — highwayman — one night held up a Mexican, who vowed he hadn't a dollar, but the captain had heard the clink of coins in the rascal's saddle-bags. He was not to be duped, let me tell you. He demanded the gold and the Mexican was obliged to deliver. Then, to teach the fellow a lesson for lying to him, our captain stripped the rogue of the silver buttons shining so bravely on his jacket."

At the conclusion of this narrative Courtesy laughed again and looked expectantly at Eleanor.

"I see nothing humorous in that," she solemnly declared.

It was quite clear to him that she had missed the point. "But don't you understand, Señorita, that if the Mexican had dealt honestly — told the truth — not lied — he might have kept his silver buttons?"

"Honestly? What of Captain Courtesy, himself?"

"What of him?"

"Why should a highwayman, a thief, a desperado, expect to be dealt with honestly?" she asked scornfully. "If the Mexican was wrong to lie — how much worse was the captain to steal!"

"Oh, come now, Señorita, you're hard on Courtesy."

"He's a thief, an outlaw! That's the best I know of him. The Virgin alone knows the worst."

The highwayman felt himself grossly wronged. "You don't consider what he has done for California," he expostulated.

At this, indignation lit up her eyes. "That's

only his excuse to break the laws of God and man," she exclaimed.

Her charge stung him, like a slap in the face. He could not realize that they had ever laughed across that table.

"She is like a volcano," he thought; "I have been dreaming; an eruption has awakened me." Nevertheless he was quick to recover. He smiled indifferently and asked, "If Courtesy were in your power, Señorita, I suppose you would give him up to the law?"

"I would!"

"That means to the Mexicans," he laughed; "you wouldn't do that!" He shook his head.

"I'm sure I would, Señor," she returned intensely. "I am not one of those who admire this outlaw, I pity him. If he does all the good that is said of him he must know better than to be so great a criminal," she concluded with magnificent contempt. Justice, in the discovery of a fraud, hav-

ing torn the bandage from her eyes, might have looked less scornful.

Courtesy was stunned. As his wits reassembled, he thought, "The volcano has precipitated an earthquake; I have been engulfed." This thought he conjured as a jest. There are certain men who ward off hard knocks with lightness. This does not necessarily indicate indifference; it rather portends courage. The captain was generously endowed with this sort of bravery. Never had it done so well by him as now. His smile was a mask concealing his distress. "Evidently, Señorita," he remarked genially, "this is the one subject upon which we cannot agree."

"THESE WOMEN BE ALL SUCH MAD AND PEEVISH ELVES"

CHAPTER IX

"THESE WOMEN BE ALL SUCH MAD AND PEEVISH ELVES"

FROM the veranda Eleanor watched the captain and Viviena moving off in the direction of the wine presses. The widow's easy manner of appropriating a man usually amused the padre's ward, but now she resented it. Viviena had taken it as a matter of course that the visitor should be interested.

"We are making wine today," she had said.

"I have heard of the San Gabriel vintage," he had returned.

"It is the best in California," she had boasted. "You know, Señor, I am mayordomo here. Will you see how I manage?"

Eleanor felt grateful to the guest for hesitating. She had been obliged, however, to dismiss him.

"Go, Señor," she had insisted, and added with a smile, "If you do not, we shall be quarreling over Captain Courtesy."

"She surrenders you to my mercy," the widow had laughed.

"Mercy from a woman! I am at your service," had been the stranger's exclamation.

Apparently they had accepted each other as comrades immediately. One might have fancied, seeing how gaily they went, that their acquaintanceship spanned years, not minutes.

In sombrero, ankle skirt, and diminutive boots, the widow was calculated to attract even the least susceptible of men. Her head reached just to her companion's shoulder, and it seemed to Eleanor — who was now standing on the well coping that she might the longer keep them in sight — that Vivienа walked unnecessarily close to that shoulder.

"I suppose she is much prettier than I," sighed the padre's ward. Psyche-like, she leaned over the

well and entreated it to contradict her. It did. She was smiling at her own image when suddenly Granville's face was reflected beside hers and she felt his arm about her.

"How you startled me," she exclaimed, pushing him away; "George, behave."

"Behave?" he echoed; "it's no crime to embrace the woman you adore."

"Adore," she laughed; "you don't know the meaning of the word."

"I'm doing my best to learn; I fancy you as a teacher."

"Then learn that love is not a thing to be taught — it must come to you."

"It has come — to you, Eleanor?"

She laughed again. "I am twenty, and a woman!"

"By Jove, you're an empress."

"And this is broad day-light, with not even a moon," she chided. "Under the circumstances it

would be very difficult for you to be convincing. Still, even if you were convincing, I do not think I could believe you."

"You don't believe I love you?" He asked this with a fine air of injury.

"Like someone, whose name I cannot recall and whom you probably would not know anyway — you protest too much," she replied roguishly.

"If I didn't speak, how should you know?" he objected.

"When I am loved," and she colored a trifle as she spoke — and spoke seriously — "I shall know without a word."

"How?"

She became almost solemn. She did not look at him but stared down at her own reflection in the well and answered: "I shall know by something intangible, yet real, very real; by something which a thousand pretty speeches might not express, yet which could be told in one glance of the eye."

He took her by the shoulders so that she was obliged to face him. "Look me in the eye," he commanded. "Now, what do you see there?"

She shrank from him and replied, "Something that makes me afraid."

"By God, you do love me," he cried triumphantly and took a step toward her, but paused at the sight of Jocoso, who was approaching from the priest's house.

Eleanor turned to him with relief. "Señor Jocoso," she exclaimed with ready invention, "you are looking for Señora Marshall. She is here. I'll find her for you." With that, she ran lightly across the garden and disappeared behind the bell tower. Granville cursed Jocoso and hurried after her.

The Mexican sat on the well coping and rolled a cigarette. Presently, Tim, bearing a huge Indian bowl, filled with wine, came toward him.

"In bowl — what is?" asked Jocoso.

"Grape juice," rejoined the youth, resting the bowl on the well rim. "Try some? It's fresh from th' vine." He picked up a gourd, rinsed it and dipped a generous drink from the bowl.

Jocoso drained the cup. "Vino superior," he exclaimed.

"Sweet," commented Tim; "gallon of it wouldn't hurt ye."

"Go! Geet out!" ordered the Mexican, catching sight of Viviena.

"Oh," laughed the lad, embracing the bowl and making off with it to the mission.

Apparently the widow did not see Jocoso, for she was passing him, a dozen yards away, in deep meditation.

"Señora," he called. His voice was clear, yet she seemed not to hear. "Señora Marshallo," he cried, starting after her.

She turned now, seeming vastly astonished. "Oh, Señor Jocoso! What are you doing here?"

"What use I tell you that, Señora? *Si*, you sabe." He grinned.

She looked at the gourd in his hand. "The new wine has gone to your head, Señor."

"*Si*, like you, it is sweet; like you, it to my head goes."

"You are perfectly ridiculous," she remarked placidly, taking a seat on the veranda under the mission eaves.

He drew up a chair, confidentially close and, with a huge sigh, said, "Then, Señora, what the use I put together my head to make offer of gift to you of my heart." He held out his arm beseechingly to her.

"Oh yes, there's some use," she observed, benevolently.

Jocoso was electrified. "Ah, *querida mia*, I explode, you give me so much happiness."

"I am very glad I have made you so happy; I hope, though, that it will agree with you."

"I will be your excellent husbandman," he announced with enthusiasm.

"What? Farmer?"

"*No, no!*" Jocoso groaned and rumpled up his hair despairingly. "I will be your excellent husband señor."

"N-o!" The widow laughed divinely.

"You laugh becows I trip down by your *Ingles* word? Or becows of my loaf?"

"Becows of your *Ingles,*" she mimicked, twirling an imaginary moustache.

"I no care for that," he chuckled, "so long, Señora, you make return of my loaf. What you e-speak back?"

"N-o!"

"Ah," groaned Jocoso, "I am too villainous for *querida mia.*"

"True, Señor, you are not good enough for me, but if woman waited until man were good enough for her — there would be few marriages."

Jocoso revived. "Then what the obstruction to me? E-speak quick. I plunge over him."

"Don't plunge too rashly," warned Viviena. "On certain conditions I might accept you." She glowingly inspected him.

He snapped his fingers. "How generous! What it is?" He had become happy again.

"You must discard that uniform; fight for our revolution."

"*Querida mia* like to make joke with me," he laughed.

"I am serious," she insisted.

"Serious! *No, no!* You no ask me be dishonorable to my countrymen!"

"You are afraid!"

"Afraid?" he snapped. "Fear is the pup-dog of the coward — not me. It is honor!"

"I did not know there was such a word in the Mexican vocabulary," she retorted. "Certainly your countrymen's acts give us no proof that they

understand it. Honor is a big word and a fine one. It cannot be familiar to those who drive peace-loving Americans from their homes, homes which we have made for ourselves in this beautiful land, a land that God gave us as well as you Mexicans."

"What difference that make for us, Señora?" he asked simply. "I loaf you."

"Shall I accept as my husband one whose sword is at the service of those who seek to crush my brothers and sisters?"

"Do not be so tempestuous, Señora," he entreated. "Be with me sociable."

"No," she exclaimed solemnly; and rising, added half tenderly, half defiantly, "When you have disavowed allegiance to Mexico, and shown your sympathy for our cause, then will I be yours — hand, head, and heart."

"Ah, Señora," he murmured, "you make me magnificently miserable."

"I'm sorry, Jocoso." Her lips quivered. She

"Come to Me when You are not a Mexican Officer"

turned away from him and started across the garden.

He stopped her. "Let me be with you a little bit yet," he besought.

She faced him again. "No! . . . Come to me when you are not a Mexican officer; and — come — soon!" She fled from him.

Jocoso, almost in tears, rode slowly back to the presidio. He was sitting mournfully on the edge of his couch, wishing that he might die of his grief, when Granville burst in upon him. The American, who was in a savage humor, paused at the sight of the Mexican's woeful countenance and began to laugh.

"Laugh now, Señor, I twist your neck," Jocoso threatened.

"What's riled you?" asked Granville.

"Ah, Señora Marshallo! *Madre de Dios!* I go hang myself."

"For once, Jocoso, we are in sympathy."

"Ho, ho! Señorita Eleanor? Is it so?"

"She's flouted me. I'll not endure it." Granville began pacing the floor.

"You hang yourself also?"

"Hang priests and highwaymen! Wait!" Granville flung himself into a chair and studied his boots. "Gad, if you only had backbone," he exclaimed; "if you dared — you might have this widow."

"I am dangerous to do anything — so I have her."

"That makes it easy, then."

"*Que?*"

"Jocoso, you want Señora Marshall above everything else in the world; I'd give my soul for Eleanor."

"*Si, si;* me also! *Dios!*" He was in despair.

"They are devoted to each other, are they not?"

"As is twins, Señor."

Granville gnawed the ends of his moustache re-

flectively. "Suppose," he presently suggested, "that one of them — Eleanor, for instance — were in great trouble and it were in your power to extricate her — would not Señora Marshall repay you?"

"*Si, si,* but it is possible not I do that."

"It is possible. . . . Arrest Eleanor!"

Jocoso looked at his companion blankly.

"Don't you understand?" asked Granville with impatience.

"You have jumped out of your head. Arrest Señorita Eleanor! Excellent! For what? Ah!" Jocoso rolled his eyes mockingly.

"For treason," was the succinct reply.

"Treason?" The Mexican grinned. He indeed began to think Granville's mind affected. "Accounth what?" he inquired.

"Secret despatches. They were stolen from Castro's messenger. They are now under a hearthstone in the mission."

Jocoso dropped his cigarette, amazed. "*Santisima!* How you know that?" he gasped.

"That's my affair. It's enough for you that the despatches, intended for his Excellency, are now in the possession of Eleanor Brinton at the San Gabriel Mission. Get a detail. Arrest her!" This was not a suggestion; it was a command.

The Mexican meditated and slowly shook his head. "I no like that," he objected.

"Why not?" Granville at once became belligerent.

"She is too adorable, Señor."

"You sentimental idiot, it's got to be done just the same."

Jocoso looked at his companion cunningly and asked, "Why you want me do that?"

"It's very simple. You place her under arrest. You are, of course, very sorry, but you are only obeying Castro's orders. You will keep her in custody here for a while. Then we will exert our influ-

ence and secure her release. Señora Marshall will reward you, Señorita Eleanor reward me."

"*No!*" exclaimed Jocoso angrily.

"I give you the order. Your colonel gives you the order. You are obliged to execute it, and at once."

The Mexican sprang up with an oath. "Someday I tell you — Castro also — go to Inferno. I think you got something in your head you no e-speak. Well, I only Mexican officer. I got to obey. But me tell you, you are the damn, damn, damn Americano."

"THE SMALLEST GOD, BUT THE MIGHTIEST"

CHAPTER X

"THE SMALLEST GOD, BUT THE MIGHTIEST"

HE invasion of love resembles the rise of the tide. Now it creeps with confident deliberation and silently takes possession; again it leaps like an Arcadian flood and boldly overwhelms.

Captain Courtesy was overwhelmed. He had heard the alarm but, fascinated by the phenomenon, he had not beaten a retreat. Now he was panic-stricken. Here was a man, who made a veritable companion of danger, standing in fear of a woman.

For a time, this brave man became a coward. He was preparing to fly from something which he could not escape. His hands trembled as he made fast his saddle girth; and, although the warm midday sun shone upon him, cold perspiration damp-

ened his brow. Only the call of gratitude induced him to pause and knock at the mission door.

It was opened to him by Eleanor. She gazed from the man to his mare, with an involuntary look of distress, and asked wistfully, "You must go?"

"You care?" he questioned in wonder.

"You are very good company." She smiled adorably, dropped her eyes before his, and retreated a step.

He suddenly became warm about the heart. A wild desire to laugh possessed him. It was simply that he was no longer afraid. He turned to his mare and said, half humorously, "We'll stay awhile, Paquita!"

Following Eleanor within, the captain noted that the heavy table, at which he had sat with her at breakfast, had been moved to a window and that it now bore a bowl of wine.

"You must taste our wine, Señor," said the girl, offering him a glass.

"To your happiness, Señorita," returned he. When he had put down the goblet, he drew up a stool close to where she sat sewing.

"See," she chided, "you interrupted me. I must be industrious now."

"Do you know what I would like to do?" he inquired absently.

She professed to be ignorant.

"Stay here," he announced.

Perhaps it was his look more than his words that disconcerted her. The knowledge that she was blushing made her furious with herself. Her rejoinder, however, gave no clue to her embarrassment: "There is no place quite so beautiful as San Gabriel."

"I agree with you, Señorita." For an instant he became audacious and added, "But it's a dangerous spot."

"Yes," she replied, with assumed innocence, "though, once the United States Government in-

tervenes, and we have gained a victory over the Mexicans, we shall have independence. Don't you think so?"

"I've no doubt of that, but I was referring to — eh — well —" He paused, his courage deserting him again.

Eleanor was apparently deeply interested in her work. He watched her, marveling at her beauty, and began to feel how utterly unworthy he was of her — not for the reason that he was a highwayman; indeed, he did not think of that — but simply because he was a man.

When love floods the heart, conceit vacates the head. "Yesterday," thought the captain, "I measured six feet; to-day I am but six inches."

Your true lover is at once disarmed by humbleness, which, of course, begets timidity. Fancy a man, intent upon taking a citadel, knocking meekly at the gate, expecting it to fall and the garrison to surrender. That strange citadel, a wom-

an's heart, may yearn to capitulate, but pride insists upon defense. So it often becomes an almost inaccessible fortress, and the more thorough the defences, the greater the charm. A woman's every mark of beauty contributes to a formidable armament, and at the same time challenges desire. Thus she at once becomes a terror and a fascination.

To overcome this native humbleness and to assume a confidence must be the lover's first care, before he can hope to endure even the battery of her eyes. Mindful of this, Captain Courtesy broke the silence by saying, "What do you think, Señorita? I was baptized Leonardo!"

"Leonardo," echoed Eleanor, lingering over the name.

"You know what it means?"

"Yes — brave!"

He laughed ruefully. "And yet I haven't the courage to —" He halted, panic-stricken once

more, for she had suddenly looked at him. Then he continued desperately, catching sight of a bouquet on the dresser, "I think that the prettiest roses I have ever seen grow here." He took a rose from a vase. "I wish you'd wear it," he finished and resumed his seat.

"It's a blush rose; at least that's what I call her," remarked Eleanor, taking the flower. "In the morning she's pink and at night turns red."

"A fickle flower, Señorita."

"No, modest," she insisted. "When the sun stares at her, she blushes crimson deep for shame."

"Did you ever hear of the language of flowers?"

"Y-e-s," she answered cautiously, wondering what he was leading to.

"What has your rose to say for herself?"

She smiled at his whim, placed the rose to her ear and replied, "I can't make out — it whispers — only whispers."

"Ah, there's the truth," he exclaimed, rising and pacing the floor; "it can only be whispered — only be whispered."

"If all her petals were tongues, she could not tell half the story." Although she spoke lowly, he heard and went to her.

"Could you?" he asked, bending near to her shoulder.

"I am not a man, Señor!"

"No, thank God, you're a woman," he cried impulsively, "and —" Here she gazed up at him so that he faltered and stumbled on thus: "and — can wield a needle." He eagerly displayed his poverty of buttons.

Eleanor laughed, much relieved, and said, "I had forgot." She handed him a small Indian basket full of odds and ends. "You may look for a button to match," she ordered, "while I thread a needle."

He found a button which might consort with the

others, provided one were gifted with imagination. "Here, this will do," said he.

Eleanor was obliged to mount a stool in order easily to reach the place of attack, which was immediately over the region of his heart. Of course, he was compelled to stand close to her. Fearful that she might fall from so giddy a height, he felt obliged to steady her. This he accomplished by laying a hand on her arm.

"They are perfect mates," she laughed, referring to the buttons.

"They are glorious," he rejoined, thinking of her eyes. That he was tempted to take her in his arms should not be held against him, since a woman exercises a sort of clairvoyant influence over her lover, lulling his conscience and awakening his emotions. Whether she works by intent or by accident, the spell is equally potent.

It is quite likely that Eleanor had at least a subconscious knowledge of her power upon the cap-

tain. She was now sewing furiously. "How your — your heart beats!" she exclaimed. Then she laughed nervously and wondered what had possessed her to say such a thing.

"Yes," he returned, with a sigh, "I've an affection."

She was on the point of asking if it were a serious one, when he caught her hands. In a flutter, she stepped backward from the stool and away from him, keeping him a willing prisoner, nevertheless, at the end of the thread. Reaching for a pair of shears, she drew him toward her again but only to sever the bond. Immediately she had released him, he seized her hand, saying with great earnestness, "Eleanor, you are joy, tears, and music to me!"

As he spoke, the garden door opened and Jocoso, followed by a half-dozen presidio soldiers, entered the room. Behind them, in haste and trepidation, came Viviena Marshall, Tim Burke, and Gray

Feather. Last of all, in seeming perturbance, hurried George Granville.

Captain Courtesy's first thought was that Granville had betrayed him and he began considering a means of escape and a method of revenge.

"*Muchas excusas,* Señorita," commenced Jocoso, with an elaborate bow. "I am commanded to make investigation of premises."

"For what?" asked Eleanor.

"Certain despatches!" replied the Mexican.

"It is an outrage," put in Granville.

"Jocoso, you're a fool!" added the widow.

"I cannot avoid that," he rejoined.

"What are these despatches?" inquired the captain.

"I know only they are here — there!" Jocoso pointed to the hearthstone and ordered two Mexicans to raise it.

Eleanor bit her lip and moved close to Courtesy as though for protection. A third soldier drew the

packet from under the stone and handed it to Jocoso, who gave it a hurried glance and addressed himself to Eleanor.

"Ten million excusas, Señorita; I have got to arrest you." He took a step toward her, when Courtesy interposed.

"Pardon, Señor," said he, snatching the despatches. "See here," he went on quickly; "these are addressed to Castro!"

"Of course. We know that. Why you interfere? I arrest you, too, maybe." Jocoso was angry.

The captain laughed. "I thought you might be interested to know how this packet came here."

"Obliged you do tell," returned Jocoso, somewhat mollified.

"You may take my word," began Courtesy, "that Señorita Brinton had no knowledge of the existence of these papers, much less that they were under the hearthstone. They were hidden there,

I may tell you, unknown to her, by the man who stole them from Castro's courier."

"You mean el Capitán Cortesia?"

"The same!"

"How you know that?"

The highwayman gave one swift look about the room. There were Mexicans at every door. Only the window was unguarded and without he saw Paquita cropping the grass. Between him and the window, and close to it, was the heavy oak table and on top of that the huge Indian bowl filled with wine. He was standing near the table, with Eleanor on his left and Jocoso on his right. He turned to her and gave her a look of great tenderness; then faced Jocoso again.

The Mexican was impatiently asking, "How you know el Capitán Cortesia stole despatches, also how he hide them here?"

"For the reason," said the captain, with deliberation, "that I am Captain Courtesy."

The shock of this announcement benumbed his hearers for a moment; but, as he sprang upon the table, Jocoso and his soldiers started forward with a shout. Whereupon the outlaw deftly raised the wine bowl with his boot and showered its contents over the Mexicans. Then he leaped through the window, flung himself on Paquita's back and, with the despatches tucked in his jacket, raced away before his enemies had so much as mopped the wine from their faces. So, by the time they raised the hue and cry after him, Captain Courtesy was far beyond overtaking, well on his way to Ranchito.

"A THING THAT CREEPS AND CANNOT GO"

CHAPTER XI

"A THING THAT CREEPS AND CANNOT GO"

THROUGHOUT the long afternoon, which followed the captain's exploit, Eleanor's heart was the centre of an emotional tempest. She was at once indignant against Courtesy and solicitous for his welfare. That he had come to the mission in the guise of an honest man, she regarded as despicable; that he disclosed his identity to save her, she considered sublime. As a highwayman, she held that he was entitled only to her scorn; as her protector, she felt that he was deserving of her gratitude. She almost hated him for his deceit and almost loved him for his courage.

Finally her thoughts became so confused that she could make no distinctions; only she began to feel a sort of pity for him, a kind of compassion for herself. The storm in her breast subsided.

Her troubled spirit grew calm, yet with the calm came a sadness greater than she had ever known.

With the approach of evening, peace also settled over San Gabriel, and now the stillness was rhythmically broken by the mission chimes ringing the angelus.

From where Eleanor sat at a window, she looked with a new sympathy upon all her world. Far off — on a hill-side, partly covered with redwood chaparral and below that a belt of laurel and then a wide ragged fringe of sage bush — she saw the smoke rising from a small adobe dwelling, the home of an Indian woman who had lost her husband. The girl's heart went out to her. At the foot of the slope, where the land rolled out broadly, spread groves of almond, peach, pear, orange, and pomegranate trees. There she saw a party of neophytes, their heads bowed, listening to the angelus. It was a familiar scene, and yet it moved her strangely. Between the grove and the garden,

which lay in front of her window, was a stretch of land upon which the wild mustard spread thickly, like a carpet of woven sunbeams. Eleanor had ever considered this riotous plant an enemy; now she was impressed with its beauty. The garden, itself, turned her thoughts to the padre, for it was there that she first saw him, when she was a child; and she remembered how he had comforted her, leading her by the hand among the flowers and naming them for her.

The garden was now much as it was then. It was set out not regularly but profusely with fan-like palms, flaming beds of geraniums, clusters of vari-colored carnations, canopies of grape-vines from which the ripe fruit hung like purple tassels, spots of yellow-flowered musk, hordes of poppies, and a withered pomegranate mantled with pink roses; while nodding before her eyes were sprays of verbena, which climbed daringly over the casement.

She could see, in fancy, the noble, kindly figure of the padre, setting up anew a flower broken by a storm, just as he might care for a soul crushed by misery. Eleanor's eyes filled as she thought of him and all that he had been to her. She even smiled faintly, serene in the knowledge of their love.

Twilight was hurrying and with it came the evening breeze, which picked up a delicate scent here, a dainty perfume there, and brought them, cool and sweet, to the window.

The bells in the tower were silent again and, in the stillness, Eleanor heard a light footfall upon the veranda. She arose eagerly as the door opened.

"Viviena, have they caught him?" she asked, seizing her by the arm and looking into her face with anxiety.

"I don't know, dear, but I fancy that the captain is too sharp to be taken even by my wonder-

ful Jocoso." The widow settled herself beside Eleanor.

"I have prayed to the Virgin to protect him," confided the ward of the padre.

Viviena smiled. "Do you think that She would hear a prayer for a highwayman?"

Eleanor looked at her reproachfully. "Though he is an outlaw, he is brave and noble. He risked his life, and more, for me."

"Yes, my dear, a sacrifice like that does cover a multitude of sins. I could love a man who would do so much for me."

The hoofbeats of a troop, drawing near the mission, reached their ears. They hastened to the door.

"Probably Jocoso's men," remarked the widow.

"Someone is dismounting at the edge of the garden," added Eleanor.

"It's Jocoso, himself!" announced Viviena, giving an unconscious touch to her coiffure.

"Oh, Viviena, perhaps he's come to tell us that he has taken Captain Courtesy."

"It's more likely that he has come for you."

"Me?"

Viviena nodded. "Jocoso's so stupid. He might think it still his duty to arrest you if he hasn't caught the captain. But don't fear; I shall manage him." The widow stepped into the garden and motioned Eleanor to withdraw.

"Don't keep him long, Viviena. Remember that I am anxious." So saying, Eleanor retreated into the house and shut the door, while the widow arranged herself on the veranda in an attitude of graceful preoccupation.

Over the chaparral-crowned hill the tip of the moon shone, its light picking out the woman from the mass of vines about her, so that Jocoso saw his sweetheart at once as he pushed through the palms and entered the garden. He paused for a moment, looking at her with reverence. The roses, which

grew about her and seemed to nestle close to her, appeared pale in the moonlight and she more pale, yet the lovelier for that in the eyes of him who adored her.

Perhaps, had he been less absorbed in the contemplation of his ladylove, he might have heard a rustle in the foliage and detected a man, in the dress of a Mexican gentleman, secreting himself behind a palm within earshot of Viviena. But Jocoso saw only the woman. He took a stride forward and ventured to call her. She looked up, affecting a pretty surprise, and exclaimed, "Oh, Señor Jocoso!"

He came closer to her, bowing, and rolled her name musically, "Señora Marshallo!"

"How untidy you are," she commented, noting his travel-stained appearance. "Where have you been?"

"Everywhere," was the answer. "I hunt el Capitán Cortesia."

"You've caught him?" She asked this with seeming indifference.

"*Carajo! No!*" Jocoso was furious. "He has got the wings of — of — a devil!"

"Well, Señor, what will you do about it?"

Jocoso was distressed. "*Muy malo!*" he groaned. "I suppose I got to investigate. Maybe Señorita Eleanor also involved with treason of Cortesia."

"Don't be a fool, Jocoso. Eleanor knew nothing about those despatches. It was just as Captain Courtesy said. He alone was the offender."

"But," objected the Mexican.

Viviena shrugged her shoulders haughtily. "Oh, if you doubt my word!"

"But Señora, if —"

"You do doubt me!" This she spoke with a tone of injury, and added with conviction, "Then you do not love me."

Jocoso was much affected. "Señora," he pro-

tested, "I besiege you, do not say so. I have a volcano of loaf for you here." He thumped his chest dramatically.

"If you really, truly loved me, Jocoso, you would believe me no matter if you knew I were not telling the truth. But I forget: you are a Mexican and therefore judge us by your own base standards."

"*Si*, Señora," he exclaimed with dignity, "I am a Mexicano and no worser becows I am. I tell you there are so many noble souls below el Rio Grande as above."

"Then, I have not met them." She shrugged her pretty shoulders.

Jocoso was hurt, but he stifled a sigh and replied with unconscious pathos, "Señora, you may e-stab me with your words of e-steel. They pierce my heart, yes; but just the same I endure, I suffer, becows I have a little happiness by the pain; also becows I am shot-ted already by your eyes so many

time, a few more holes you put through me no difference make."

Viviena arose impulsively and held out her hand to him, asking repentantly, "Forgive me, Jocoso?"

"*Si, amiguita mia,*" he returned, taking her hand.

"And believe me?"

He melted entirely before her archness. "*Si, querida mia,*" he murmured and kissed her finger tips.

Viviena looked up at him smilingly. "Jocoso, you are almost irresistible. I wish you were anything but a Mexican officer."

He immediately brightened up. "Oh, ho, I tell you. I think about that muchisimo. I find the way out. One year I serve more. Then I e-stop with resignation honorable. I become what you like: a Chinese, yes! a Eskimo! What care I so long I conquest you. What you say now? I give

you ring, the kiss of betroth, now, tonight!" He took a ring from his finger and tempted her with it.

It was difficult for her to say no, so she simply shook her head. Jocoso, however, was not to be put down.

"I no take it," he announced. "Those is the words of your mouth, not the e-speaks of your heart. I shall have the yes."

Viviena retreated to the mission door. He followed and continued: "I no go till I get him. I sit here in el moonlight and sunlight and wind and rain — now and bymeby and always till I get that yes."

In a panic, she waited to hear no more, but slipped into the mission and shut the door after her. Jocoso waved his hand at the door and tossed his head with determination. Then he turned to the bench and touched the worn arm. "She lay her little hand here. Angelita, I kiss the spot!" He did so with ceremony, without even looking about

to see if anyone were watching. He would have done as much were the whole world attending. He was exceedingly proud of his love and had no care as to who should know of it; what is more, he had just come into the consciousness that there was power in it. For the first time in his courtship he began to be confident.

"I tell you," he counseled with himself, as he rolled a cigarette and sat down on the well coping; "I beseech her in her castle, like did my many great-grandfather in España so long ago, when they conquest make by a great while time sitting before doors, so that they who is behind get so ill with seeing them befront, that they say, '*Diablo!* Take the devil what you have desire of and go!' So with me is it to be also. *Si*, I sit through many weathers till that ultimatum is not."

"FORTUNE'S A JADE, I CARE NOT
WHO TELL HER"

CHAPTER XII

"FORTUNE'S A JADE, I CARE NOT WHO TELL HER"

THE man, who had all the while stood concealed, now stepped from behind a palm, rolling a cigarette. He wore the trappings of a caballero: a black sombrero, trimmed with silver lace, cocked over one eye; a suit of blue velvet — the jacket short and ornamented with huge metal buttons — the pantaloons wide and slashed from hip to foot, the gaping seams laced to the knee with silver cord; a gay scarf tied loosely over an embroidered shirt of white linen; a crimson sash knotted about the waist; undressed deerskin boots set off with great spurs; and a velvet serape flung with careless cunning over his left shoulder.

When this picturesque figure completed the manufacture of his cigarette, he approached and accosted Jocoso.

"*Buenas noches,* Señor!" said he, politely.

The Mexican, startled from his reverie, arose and returned the salutation.

"Pardon, Señor, may I trouble you for a light?" inquired the intruder.

Jocoso politely offered his cigarette. The stranger took it and, in lighting his own, extinguished the lieutenant's and passed it back, apparently unconscious of his awkwardness.

"Ah," exclaimed Jocoso with a wry smile, "you have thrown him out."

The other, profusely apologizing, leaned toward the lieutenant, with cigarette held between his lips. As though to steady himself, he laid his left hand on Jocoso's shoulder and, when the cigarettes touched tip-to-tip, with his free hand he deftly whipped the lieutenant's sword from out its scabbard.

"*Maldito!*" cried Jocoso in angry surprise.

"Silence, Señor," commanded the stranger,

pressing the sword point to the lieutenant's breast. "Your hands above your head."

Jocoso obeyed.

His captor smiled and remarked, "I beg of you to excuse me, but this is imperative. Be good enough to face about."

The lieutenant turned his back and the stranger, taking a kerchief from his jacket, bound Jocoso's hands. That done, he looked about. His eye fell upon the chapel door, and, seizing his captive by the arm, made in that direction. They had hardly taken a dozen steps, however, when the sound of voices came to their ears and Viviena and Eleanor appeared at the mission door.

The stranger quickly drew his captive behind a palm, warning him in a whisper, "If you speak, it will be unpleasant for both of us."

Viviena was disturbed. "He's gone," she exclaimed with disappointment.

"It's just as well," observed Eleanor. "I

would not care to face him. I feel as guilty as you."

"Guilty," gasped the widow; "for what?"

"L-lying about me!"

"Eleanor, you're absurd. What's one little lie? I'd tell a million for the sake of anyone I love. Any woman would — wouldn't you?"

Eleanor was quite positive that she would not.

"My dear little saint," laughed the widow, "just wait until you're tempted." She linked her arm in that of her companion and started across the garden. When Eleanor protested that she could go no further, Viviena pleaded, "Please, dear, come a little way with me. I feel so strange, so sort of lonely tonight."

"Viviena! What's come over you?" asked the girl in amazement, yielding to her companion's entreaty.

"Nothing, only it's so difficult to be firm," was the reply, as she drew Eleanor close to her.

When the women passed out of sight and hearing, the stranger led Jocoso from behind the palm and remarked, "I shall have to make you perfectly harmless." He threw off his sombrero and unknotted the kerchief from about his head.

The lieutenant gazed at his captor blankly for an instant and then ejaculated in mild surprise, "*Buenas noches* to el Capitán Cortesia!"

The outlaw laughed.

"*Si*, you *are* the devil!"

"Now, do you know, I have very little against you," said Courtesy, folding his kerchief. "Indeed, I should not be troubling myself with you now, but for your promise to sit on the mission doorsill forever. Really, you put yourself very much in my way. You have your affair, I have mine. Therefore, for the time, I am obliged to suppress you."

Without ceremony, he gagged Jocoso and, as he made the kerchief fast, he went on to say: "It's a

pity to muzzle so eloquent a love-maker. Necessity, though, imposes this hardship. Put yourself in my place. Under similar circumstances you, no doubt, would do as much for me."

Unwinding the scarf from his waist, the captain quickly hobbled Jocoso's feet. "All's fair in love and war, Señor, and this adventure partakes of both," supplemented the captain. Then assuring himself that his work had been properly done, he recovered his sombrero, relieved Jocoso of sword belt and scabbard, buckling them about himself, sheathed the sword, took his captive by the shoulders, and pushed him into the chapel.

About the same time that Courtesy was laying Jocoso on a bench in the chapel, Tim Burke, primed with a purpose, was returning from a visit to the presidio. Tim walked after the fashion of one bent upon an affair of huge importance. He bustled across the garden, flung open the kitchen door and, as he had hoped, found Gray Feather dream-

ing over the fire. He stamped in, pulled up a chair beside her and sat down with a fine air of determination.

"Darlin'," he began, "I'm what they call in love with ye."

"Love? Who that?" she asked, indifferently interested.

"It's me that can tell ye." After considering the subject for a moment, he went on. "Did ye ever watch a tea-kittle boil?"

She nodded.

"Then ye's seen how th' water starts a-bubblin' an' a-bubblin', an' if ye don't take th' kittle off th' fire it bubbles all over everything?" He paused to be sure that she understood. She did. He continued: "Well, me heart's a tea-kittle, an' it's bubblin' over with love for ye. Ye — see — eh — that ye are th' fire — that — eh — makes th' heat that makes th' tea-kittle — that's me heart — bubble; an' that's love." He looked at her triumphantly.

Her face was without expression. She was silent.

"Well, darlin'," he resumed with less confidence, "now have ye — have ye got them bubbles in yer heart — for — for me, eh?"

"Only big brave make Gray Feather's heart bub-ble," she replied.

"Brave? Sure, an' what's a brave?"

"Great warrior — get killed — for tribe."

"Holy frost, I'd sooner be jist an ordinary live man, than a dead brave."

"Maybe not all dead," she remarked stoically.

Tim brightened up. "Oh, ye don't have t' be a whole corpse t' be a brave — half dead — eh?"

"Hum!" She nodded again.

"All right," he exclaimed, slapping his knees; "I'll show ye." With that, he up and kissed her. She took this unkindly of him and fetched him a box across the cheek which made his ears ring.

From a safe distance, without the door, he re-

marked in oratorical tones, "Sure, I was braver thin I thought, darlin'; but as I said before, I'll show ye yet. Thim California Riflemen is goin' t' begin wallopin' th' Mexicans. There'll be hell t' pay, an' I'm goin' t' be in it. Perhaps I'll never come back t' ye. If I do, I'll either be a brave or a corpse."

"Fool!" was the Indian girl's terse observance as she returned to the kitchen.

Tim was considering the advisability of following her, when he was startled by a whistle. Facing about, he saw the highwayman standing by the chapel.

"Ah, Señor, an' who are you?" inquired the youth, advancing.

"Captain Courtesy!"

"Th' divil!"

The outlaw smiled. "You and Jocoso seem to have the same opinion of me. I hoped you were more friendly."

"Indeed an' I am. What kin I do for ye, Cap'n?"

"What was that you were saying just now about the riflemen? Have they actually begun a campaign against Castro?"

Tim bloomed with importance. "That they have, Cap'n; an' be Ol' Nick, I'm goin' to be in it."

"Good," commented the other; "it's time they were doing something more than organize. If they'd pitched in six months ago, by this time we'd have driven these greasers across the border."

Tim looked at Courtesy quizzically and asked, "You weren't whistlin' for me jist t' say that, were ye?"

"No," laughed the captain. "What I wish you'd do is to go over to the presidio and see what those Mexicans are about. You know, they're hunting for me. I've got — eh — business here and I don't fancy being disturbed. Sabe?"

"I do, Señor. I kin tell th' time o' day be moonlight. You'll find th' Señorita down be th' widdy's." With that advice, he went his way.

Courtesy looked after the lad, smilingly, and then started in the direction taken by Viviena and Eleanor. As he passed into the shadows cast by a huge pepper-tree, the chapel door creaked on its hinges and the head and shoulders of Jocoso might have been seen in the moonlight.

The Mexican was still bound, gagged and hobbled, yet he made his way upon his knees through the doorway. Now and again he lost his balance, toppling over on his face, but he recovered himself and slowly crept into the garden.

Presently he paused, at the sound of a footstep, and crouched expectantly. The tread drew nearer and now he distinguished the figure of George Granville moving toward the mission. Jocoso raised himself upon his knees and swayed from side to side to attract the renegade's attention; but

Granville, looking neither to right nor left, kept on until he reached the padre's door. There he knocked impatiently.

His summons were answered by Gray Feather, who, in reply to his questioning, informed him that Eleanor was not within nor did she know where the señorita might be found. Granville's spirits somewhat dashed, he turned from the door and, as he went past the chapel, caught sight of Jocoso. With an exclamation of astonishment he ran to the lieutenant's assistance, untied the gag and set free his hands.

"*Maldito sea! Confundate Dios!*" exploded the Mexican, tearing off his hobbles.

"How in thunder did this happen?" inquired Granville.

Jocoso staggered to his feet with an oath and answered, "El Capitán Cortesia!"

"Courtesy — here?" ejaculated the other in consternation.

"*Ya lo era!* I crack his neck!" spluttered Jocoso.

"Where is he now?"

The Mexican held up a finger in warning. "Sssh! Somewhere close besides," he whispered. "We get regimento — catch him these time quick!"

"DARE TO BE GREAT WITHOUT
A GUILTY CROWN"

CHAPTER XIII

"DARE TO BE GREAT WITHOUT A GUILTY CROWN"

HILE Granville and Jocoso were hurrying toward the presidio, the Padre Reinaldo came out of the mission and, as was his custom of an evening, entered the chapel to pray. The door was scarcely closed behind him, when Eleanor, returning alone from the widow's dwelling, passed through the garden and seated herself upon the well coping, which was embroidered with rose-vines. The stars, like sparks from a great forge, were beginning to scatter over the heavens, and the moon, now showing boldly over the hills, cast the bell tower into silhouette against the sky.

For some moments she sat there meditating, her fancy stirred by the beauty of the night, dreaming with rebellious soul, of what might have been.

Courtesy, with cautious tread, presently stepped from the shelter of a grape arbor. His big sombrero, set jauntily upon his head, shaded his face. He drew near Eleanor and when he stood beside her whispered, "Señorita!"

She started timorously to her feet and exclaimed, "Who are you, Señor?"

With a flourish he removed his sombrero. She gasped his name.

"I am at your service," he remarked, bowing again.

"Why — why are you here? You — you will be taken. Go — go, I beg of you," she entreated.

"There is nothing to fear, Señorita. These geegaws are sufficient disguise. Even you did not know me."

She looked at him with unaffected admiration. He wore the gay dress as though he were born to it, and it became him.

"You fancy my new habiliments," he went on

lightly; "ah, but you should have seen the grand señor from whom — *of* whom — I had them."

"You have been plying your trade again," she exclaimed bitterly.

"Permit me to explain, Señorita. When I so unceremoniously took my leave of you this morning, I rode post-haste to Ranchito, and delivered the despatches myself to our leader, Dr. Semple. Not knowing, then, what difficulty you might be in, I decided to return to San Gabriel. On my way here I met this fine Mexican. With mask and pistol I addressed him so: 'Your pardon, Señor. May I trouble you to contribute to the cause of our revolution?' Fancy, Señorita, with an oath, he flung his purse at me; and I had been so polite."

"As to rob him," she added contemptuously.

"No, no! I said, 'Señor, for all your fine clothes, you are clearly not a gentleman. You are unfit to wear the garb of one. Take back your

purse; I buy your velvets.' We must believe the old adage, Señorita, that 'a fair exchange is no robbery.'"

She looked at the captain earnestly and asked, "Have you no conscience?"

"Indeed, I have," he rejoined, with a smile; "it was that which brought me here: I owed you thanks for your hospitality; I fancied that I might serve you."

"I wonder that you can face me!"

He was amazed at her vehemence. "Why, what have I done?" he inquired in wonder.

"What have you not done?" The interrogation was a challenge.

He pondered for an instant. "I have never robbed a regiment," he answered solemnly. "Castro and his escort of twenty is my record; but that's nothing to boast of — they were Mexicans, not men."

"And women?" she queried succinctly.

There was reproach in his reply, "I am called 'Captain *Courtesy*.'"

"Highwayman! Outlaw!" She flung the words at him.

"Highwayman! Outlaw!" he echoed calmly. "Yes; because I dared seek the murderers of my father and mother and demand a life for a life; because I escaped; because they set a price on my head." Then waxing warmer, he went on. "My crime, Señorita, is that I have failed to avenge my parents; that the renegade American, leader of those assassins, lives — but only because he is unknown to me."

"You have sought revenge," she coldly retorted.

"I have; but time has dulled the edge of my hatred. The wrongs of my countrymen and yours, have become my own. It is of them I think most. Do you fancy that my life offers me any great happiness? Why, I am hunted, like a beast, night and day."

"But this need not be." Eleanor's tone was less judicial.

"You forget that I am an outlaw; that I have taken the road against all Mexico."

Her attitude changed. She had been his judge; now she became his counsellor. "You might leave California," she suggested.

"Desert her when she most needs me?"

"You might find an honest way to aid the cause."

"I'm not ashamed of what I've done," said he stubbornly; "I'm proud of my occupation; I glory in my title, 'Captain Courtesy, the patriot highwayman.'"

She glanced up at him and thought, "He is nothing but a boy; I am years older than he." Then she said, "That you have been unselfish and used the money of your victims to our cause, does not alter the fact that you do wrong." The moment she had said this, her thoughts shifted to a

phase of his case which touched her. "More than that," she resumed, "you live a lie; deceive even those who might be friends to you."

"Deceive my friends?" He was indignant.

She explained. "You came here a stranger; we took you in; you called yourself Leonardo Davis."

"That is my name. Should I have added my sobriquet, 'Captain Courtesy?'"

"Yes!"

"Then you would not have received me; my mare was spent; the Mexicans were at my heels. What harm was it to you that I concealed my identity?"

"Harm? You deceived me! I thought you a man of honor. I even fancied that I had found a — a friend." She paused, in doubt as to whether she should say more; but that doubt was swept away by an emotional impulse and she went on, unthinkingly, her words rising from her heart:

"Don't you understand that you have shown yourself — unworthy; that I should not have given you a second thought — had you not deceived me? Can't you see even further than that? Any woman, not knowing you to be — be what you are — might have — have — cared a great deal for you. You — you deceived me — deceived me — concealed your identity, and — and — made — made — *love* to me!" She stopped for an instant, trembling; then asked piteously, "Suppose I *had* loved you?"

"Suppose you had loved me?" he ventured, much moved.

"Not knowing you to be — what you are — and then — when it should have been too late — to discover — when it should have been too late —"

He took a step toward her, held out his arms in entreaty, and asked, "Is it too late?"

"Ah," she cried, springing to her feet and repelling him, "I hate you; hate you; hate you!"

With that, she turned from him as though to enter the mission, but stopped at sight of Tim Burke who came running toward her across the garden.

"Th' Mexicans are comin'!" exclaimed the lad breathlessly.

"For me?" inquired Eleanor.

"No, for him!" Tim pointed to the captain.

"I'll make tracks," said Courtesy.

"Ye can't, Cap'n. The whole regiment's out, the mission's surrounded."

"I'm obliged to you for your timely warning," remarked the captain with irony.

"Ye must excuse me, but —"

Courtesy cut him off curtly. "Who's in command?" he asked.

"Jocoso!"

This piece of information seemed incredible to the outlaw. He ran toward the chapel door and at the same time he heard the soft notes of an organ. A look within showed him the padre at the key-

board; a glance without discovered to him his scarf and kerchiefs.

"Jocoso 'll be here with a detail immegiately. Ye must hide quick," advised Tim.

Eleanor threw open the priest's door. "Come, Señor," she exclaimed; "hurry!"

Courtesy did not move. "I cannot; you despise me," said he.

"But your life is in danger!"

"What of that — if you hate me?"

"For the Virgin's sake, come!"

"No!"

"Then for — for *mine!*"

"Thank you," said he tenderly and followed her into the mission.

"ANGELS ARE BRIGHT STILL,
THOUGH THE BRIGHTEST
FELL"

CHAPTER XIV

"ANGELS ARE BRIGHT STILL, THOUGH THE BRIGHTEST FELL"

COURTESY had been warned none too soon. But a moment after he had taken refuge in the mission, Jocoso and Granville, each leading a detail of Mexicans, appeared before the chapel. The American, determined that the captain should not escape, had seen to it himself that the cordon of soldiers was drawn tight about San Gabriel; and then had set about a systematic search of the premises.

"We've looked everywhere else for him," he remarked to Jocoso. "He must be here."

The lieutenant, noting the sound of music from the chapel, called within to the padre. "He maybe know something," Jocoso explained.

The priest came to the door, carrying his lantern, and inquired their business.

"El Capitán Cortesia is here — somewhere," volunteered Jocoso.

"You must be mistaken," said the good father.

The lieutenant rubbed his wrists. "Oh, ho, I tell you, *si, si.* I know. I see myself too mucho."

"I have not seen him," insisted the padre.

The Mexican looked at him unbelievingly. "Well, maybe!"

"You might inquire of the señorita," suggested Granville.

Jocoso went to the mission and knocked vigorously at the door. He was promptly answered by Eleanor.

"What is it now, Señor?" was her calm greeting.

"El Capitán Cortesia, this time. I command you to give him up."

Apparently the señorita was much surprised, for

she inquired, "What have I to do with the giving up of Captain Courtesy?"

"You have got him there," cried Jocoso, shaking his finger at the mission.

Eleanor held wide the door. "You may search for him if you wish," said she.

Jocoso hesitated. He thought: "This is a trap. The moment I enter, I shall be shot. That is what I should do were I in the outlaw's place. I cannot rely upon my men. They are stupid. Maybe Granville would undertake the investigation, but I dare not suggest it. He might fancy me afraid." Jocoso wished he had not come. After all, what did he care whether the captain were taken or no. Yes, Jocoso had been very much provoked at the cavalier manner in which Courtesy had treated him, yet no harm had been done, except to his dignity. He was rapidly recovering from that. Again, Jocoso hoped to come often to the mission on a very different errand. Were he not discreet.

what was more likely than a final dismissal? These displays of arms certainly would not warm his welcome. If Granville were not present, Jocoso would certainly apologize at once and go. Decidedly, he was a fool. Well he must say something and without delay.

This is what he said. "No, no, *amiguita mia,* I make no trespass. I take honor of you. You say, 'El Capitán Cortesia no here;' I say, '*Si,* he has gone then.'"

The surprise of this proposal brought Eleanor face to face with a situation which she had not even considered. She practically held the life of the highwayman in her hand. She could save that life with a lie; yet she had been taught that to lie were as great a sin as to steal. The outlaw had been her preserver. Must she now betray him? Surely to be ungrateful were as bad as to lie. Ah, all that was mere sophistry with which she sought to lull her conscience. The end did not justify the means.

The question was a simple one. Dared she sin to save this man?

She lied. "He is not here." She said this in a monotone, like one under the spell of a hypnotist.

Granville could scarcely credit his ears. He was confident that Courtesy was in the mission, yet he knew Eleanor well enough to believe her incapable of falsehood.

Jocoso turned to the American with a noncommittal grunt. The padre hung his lantern on the veranda and questioned Eleanor with a look. She avoided his eyes, smiled, and remarked, "They fancy that Captain Courtesy is here."

Granville plucked Jocoso by the sleeve and whispered, "I believe she's lying. Of course, he may have gone before we surrounded the place, though I doubt it. Put her to a test. See if she will swear by San Gabriel that she is not hiding the road-agent."

The lieutenant bowed again to Eleanor and said,

"*Muchas excusas,* Señorita, I can only take honor of you if you swear by San Gabriel that el Capitán Cortesia is away."

She hesitated. An oath? No, no, that asked too much of her.

"You no e-speak!" cried the Mexican; "ah, you have lie. He is here!"

Eleanor deliberately stepped from the door, faced the chapel, raised her hand toward the bell tower, upon which a cross shone in the moonlight, and pronounced the oath: "I swear by San Gabriel that Captain Courtesy is not within the mission."

"*Caramba!* He escape again," exclaimed Jocoso, less angry than he appeared. "*Buenas noches,* Señorita; *buenas noches,* Padre!" He waved his hand and the Mexicans filed out of the garden. "What I tell you, Señor, Cortesia the devil," observed the lieutenant as he and Granville made for their picket line. "Well, we sleep some

tonight, everybody, anyway." With difficulty he concealed his relief.

As for the captain, although he was out of hearing, he had observed, from a window, the drama enacted in the garden, and now he was amazed to see Eleanor throw herself into the padre's arms. He could not be sure, yet it seemed to him that she was sobbing. He withdrew from the window, feeling that he had no place in this epilogue, even as a spectator.

Eleanor was indeed weeping on the padre's shoulder.

"What is the trouble?" he asked.

Without raising her head, she pointed to the mission and gasped, "Captain Courtesy is there."

The priest groaned. Then, after a moment's silence, he said, "Daughter, you would not have done so much for yourself. Why then for him?"

She did not reply. He drew her to the lantern light, took her face between his palms and gazed

into her eyes. Presently he sighed with understanding. "My child, my child," he murmured tenderly, and laid her head upon his shoulder and drew her close. "The Virgin forgive her and preserve her soul," he prayed. He kept her in his arms for some little time. At last he put her from him gently and said with firmness, "This man must go at once."

"Padre!" she protested.

"He is unworthy of you."

"No, no! He is as good as I. Have I not sinned?"

"Yes, dear child, but there are sins and sins. His have been for hatred, which stirreth up strife; yours for love, which covereth all sins. Even a saint might fall for love."

Eleanor pondered for an instant. "But if he should repent?" she asked.

"Repentance for him must mean reformation. One cannot reform in an hour, in a day. By right

living, through tears and travail, must he make his expiation."

The old man moved toward the door. Eleanor stayed him with this query: "He must go — at once?"

"At once!" was the reply.

"But may I not tell him to come again, Padre?"

"No, daughter. I shall not set a premium upon sin. He must be brayed in the mortar." The priest called within the house, summoning the captain. As he waited the outlaw, he said to Eleanor, "*You* must send him away."

"I?" she questioned in a panic.

"Yes," returned the padre. "If I told him to go, he might leave tonight, but he would return tomorrow."

She pleaded with him: "Consider; it will be very hard for me."

He would not be moved. He told her that it was her duty to dismiss the highwayman.

Courtesy appeared at the doorway, advanced to Eleanor, and said, "Señorita, you have saved my life. It was noble of you."

"She has perjured herself, imperilled her soul for you. Think of that, Señor." With these words, the padre took his lantern and went into the chapel, while Eleanor, sinking into a chair, hid her face in her hands.

The captain, awed by what the priest had said, and troubled by Eleanor's grief, bent over her. "I beseech you, Señorita, do not weep," he ventured. "I shall never forgive myself for having made you so miserable."

"Go away!" she entreated. "My tears are not for you; they are for myself."

"Yet you did this for me?"

She raised her head, dried her eyes and, without looking at him, said, "Twice you protected me; I could do no less for you. We are quits. Go, go!"

"You did this merely to pay the debt?"

"Do not question me!" It was not a command; it was a supplication.

"You do not wish to see me again! That's it!" He turned from her a little.

"Please, Señor, you must not speak to me."

"May not a sinner speak to a saint?"

"A saint!" she echoed with irony.

"To beg forgiveness for all his transgressions?"

"Go, go!" she timorously petitioned.

"You deny me penitence?" he persisted.

"You — you are not — cannot be — sincere," she faltered.

"I shall prove to you that I am!" He drew a mask from his shirt, crushed it in his hand, and flung it at her feet.

She stared at it for a moment; then, venturing to look at him, realized that he was indeed penitent. If she was miserable, he was no less unhappy. She could not but pity him. She sighed, "You are blind."

He came closer to her. "Cannot the blind be made to see?"

"Only by faith," was her answer.

"Faith? Faith's but another name for love; and may not love work miracles?" He leaned over her as he spoke, and the pain of his heart was in his voice.

She seemed not to hear, but gazed, as though under a spell, across the garden where the moonlight lay, like a silvery veil of silk, over the sleeping flowers. A breeze, coming on tiptoe, as if it feared to waken them, loosened a long strand of her hair and blew it across his face. He touched her arm. She started up with a little cry, "Go, go, go!"

She was at the door, when he stopped her. "I will go, but let me say this: your remorse for what you have done for me, and the love that you have awakened in me, have wrought the miracle, opened my eyes. I have been blind, blind, blind. I have

not robbed so much for our cause as for my own revenge."

She faced him with this accusation: "Yes, it is revenge which is deep-rooted in your heart. It is that which has made you an outlaw."

"No, Señorita, no," he protested. "Love has uprooted revenge. Think, for an instant, of the many years that I have been friendless. What had I to feed upon but my injuries? Many a lonely night, when I have lain beneath the stars, I have seen, as in a vision, my home in San Pedro as it was in my happy, innocent boyhood." He clenched his hands and groaned, "Oh, mother mine!" He sighed and went on. "I knew then what it was to love and to be loved. There was nothing else in my heart. God! I went away for a little while; left her with a warm kiss upon my cheek. I came back to what, Señorita? A home? No, a morgue! My father's body lay across the doorway, where I had so often played; and my

mother — in death, as always in life — close beside him. Weep then, Señorita? No! In that hour revenge tore love from my heart; and can you wonder?"

Much moved, she answered him unsteadily, in a whisper, "No, no!"

He continued simply, uncertainly: "And then, after many bitter years — you — you touch me — here." He laid his hand over his heart. "Again love creeps into my heart. It turns revenge out of doors. Of course, they cannot live together. The stronger of the two remains. Now, it is love. And what a revolutionist he is. What a magician! His work is done so quickly. It was not until just now — when you told me that I must go — that I felt its full power upon me. But it besieged me last night; it took possession today, so that I forgot that I was a highwayman. But that life shall claim me no longer. I give you my word. I promise you, by that memory, which I hold most

sacred, that I shall be honest, honest as you might wish me."

He waited a moment for her to speak. Then he asked, "Have you nothing to say?"

"You — must — go," she faltered.

"Yes, but I may return?"

She shook her head.

"Señorita, do not send me away forever." He dropped his voice, the words falling slowly: "Let me have some dear thought to cherish; something to dream of; something to hope for. Tell me that when I have proved myself worthy of you that — repentantly — I may come back to you, my saint!"

She was not proof against this pleading. "'If the wicked turn from his sins, he shall not die,'" she quoted.

The padre, coming from the chapel, saw Courtesy take Eleanor's unresisting hand and heard him say, "If that is true, you must give me hope."

Her lips parted to tender him some word of en-

couragement, when the priest touched her arm. She turned to the old man with a cry.

"Come," said the padre to the girl. "Go," said he to the highwayman. Then he led his ward into the mission and closed the door.

"I knocked at the gate of paradise," mused the outlaw, "and they turned me away."

"OUR BROKEN TUNES WE THUS REPAIR"

CHAPTER XV

"OUR BROKEN TUNES WE THUS REPAIR"

THAT night Captain Courtesy might have been seen riding slowly in the direction of Ranchito. It was Paquita, not he, that picked the road, since the outlaw gave no thought to his journeying. His mind was concerned with that query, 'What is the profit of it?' which ever confronts him, who, on the very threshold of repentance, meets with rebuff where he had looked for welcome. Though the captain rendered himself no answer to this question, he found that he could no longer look with equanimity upon his old mode of life. Love had, indeed, revolutionized him and no less thoroughly by reason of its sudden conquest. He began to see himself as the woman saw him; as his God knew him. In other words, his conscience awoke.

Conscience does not make cowards of us, rather is it a spur to courage. It is too much thought that weakens resolution; brooding that begets fear.

Courtesy had been a brave man; he became a braver one. This new courage was inspired by his awakened conscience. He resolved that, though he might not win the padre's ward, he would, nevertheless, prove worthy of her. This, which he first saw in the light of a duty to himself, presently became a desire more ardent than any he had known.

He ran over in his mind all that Eleanor had said to him. He remembered her suggestion, "You might find an honest way to serve your country." But how? Tim's intelligence that the California Riflemen were about to begin a campaign against Castro, occurred to him. Surely he could not do better than enlist with them. Where could they be found? He abused himself for not questioning the youth further. No, he could not return to the mission and inquire. He must seek information

elsewhere. Whither was he bound? Ranchito! Nothing could be better. Had he not that very morning ridden thither and delivered the Mexican despatches into the hands of that leader and patriot, Dr. Semple? He would go to him now.

Within a half-hour the captain was knocking at the doctor's door. The patriot, himself, opened it and bade him enter. In a few words Courtesy made known his business.

"You come at an opportune time," said Semple. "You can serve us, if you will. Even now I am waiting for a messenger to send on a mission of importance. He is late. Perhaps you might go in his stead."

The captain assured him that he would be glad to undertake any commission.

"Very good, Señor. Now listen to me. The despatches which you brought me this morning, I have deciphered in part; enough to reveal that Castro is preparing to march with fire and sword

either up the San Gabriel valley, or toward San Pedro; I cannot make out which. Now it is imperative that we have definite intelligence regarding their plan. This it shall be your business to secure. Go to Rivera, where you will find some of the Mexican troops quartered. They are to participate in this movement. From them you must obtain your information. Lose no time about it. Once informed, ride with all your might to San Pedro. The riflemen are encamped there. You will deliver your news to their captain, John Brunt, and, if you wish, you may enlist with him. I will give you credentials that he may make no question of your integrity."

"I thank you, Señor, for your trust," returned the captain, "but why, may I ask, should you place such confidence in a stranger?"

Dr. Semple smiled. "I flatter myself that I am a judge of men. Besides, none but a friend would have brought me Castro's despatches."

"But might that not be a clever ruse to deceive you?"

"It might, but I'm confident it is not."

"You seem *very* confident, Doctor."

"I am."

"Yet, you do not even know my name."

The patriot smiled again. "You are Captain Courtesy."

The outlaw stared at him, bewildered; he even blushed.

"News speeds almost as quickly as thought," explained Semple. "Before you came to me this morning, I had heard that Captain Courtesy waylaid Castro's courier and robbed him of despatches. I, myself, have looked into your pistol barrel. On that occasion, when finally you perceived that I was not a Mexican, you handed my purse back to me, saying, 'A thousand pardons, Señor; I meant no insult in mistaking you for a greaser. Blame the night and your good horsemanship.' I have not

only a good memory but also a good ear. So when you addressed me today, I at once detected something familiar in your voice, and when you handed me the despatches, I was assured that Captain Courtesy stood before me."

"And that knowledge has not weighed against me?"

"Quite the contrary, my friend. You have done not a little for our cause, however much one might question your methods. If you care to tell me, I should like to know what brought you here tonight."

"Simply this: I've done with being a highwayman."

The patriot laid his hand on the captain's shoulder and said, "And you shall no longer be an outlaw once we have shaken off the Mexican yoke. California, a free State, or part of the great Union, your record is wiped out. Remember, then, that in fighting for your country, you are

working out your own salvation. Now go, Señor, and God be with you."

It was nine o'clock when Courtesy left Ranchito and before ten he made out the lights of Rivera. He pulled up his mare in a clump of willows on the bank of the river, dismounted, and ascended a bluff to reconnoitre. As he reached the top of the embankment, he ran fairly into the arms of a Mexican patrol, that stepped from the cover of some brush and challenged him with leveled muskets. He wheeled about with the intention of leaping into the creek, when still another Mexican intercepted him.

"Who goes there?" demanded the soldier.

"A friend," returned the captain in Spanish.

"The countersign."

"Eh — Castro," invented Courtesy.

"That's not the password. You're under arrest."

The captain laughed. "You can't mean that.

You're poking fun at me — eh — Señor Corporal?"

"Throw up your hands!" commanded the man with stripes on his sleeve, and, ordering his companions to keep the prisoner covered, he relieved Courtesy of Jocoso's sword. "We're ordered to arrest anyone found on the bank tonight, unless he can give a good reason for being abroad. I want to have a look at you. Come along. Remember if you make an ugly move my men will shoot."

"And probably hit *you*," commented the captain, who had, on many occasions, tested Mexican marksmanship.

The corporal, followed by Courtesy and the patrol, led the way to a cabin, which stood some fifty feet from the edge of the bluff. It had probably once served as a shelter for sheep herders, but now, as the captain entered, he noted that it had been converted into a sort of tavern. A brace of Mexican lancers sat drinking at a rude table. They

were served by a withered old woman, who appeared to be the keeper. A corner of the hut was occupied by a counter, improvised of two barrels and a plank, upon which were displayed an assortment of beverages in jugs and bottles. The lancers started up as Courtesy entered and inquired his business.

"I am a courier of his Excellency, General Castro," replied the captain.

"Then what are you doing here?" asked a Mexican.

"That's what I should like to know," put in the corporal.

"My mission is a secret one," explained Courtesy.

"Where is your passport?"

"I was told that Castro's name would be sufficient."

The Mexicans grinned. "Tell that to Colonel Gomez," joked the corporal. "I must take you to headquarters."

"You'll lose your stripes if you do," threatened the captain.

The corporal had no fear so long as he was doing his duty. If the prisoner were in the service of his Excellency, he should have something to show for it. Since he had no credentials, he was under arrest and must go at once to headquarters across the river.

"You are quite in the right, Señor," observed the outlaw cheerfully. "My negligence alone has placed me in this false position. Permit me to compliment you upon your discipline. It is too rare a thing in our army, which, as you must well know, is notoriously slipshod. By all means bring me before your colonel. I have no doubt that I shall be able to convince him that my business here is in the interest of his Excellency. Ah, here is the good mother with a drink at our elbow. Although I am your prisoner, I presume you will not object to sharing a bottle with me." He flung

some silver on the table. "The best, if you please, madre."

The corporal demurred, but the others insisted, so he gave in.

"I drink to his Excellency," cried the captain; "may he string the Americans up — every mother's son of them!"

"His Excellency!" they chorused and drank.

The corporal kept his eye on his prisoner, but was quite satisfied that Courtesy was without guile since he drained his goblet; and, what is more, the Mexican succumbed to the stranger's good humor so far as to permit the opening of a second and a third bottle. After that, all reckoning was lost, so that when the captain, apparently no more sober than his companions, proposed a song, the corporal sat down to listen, forgetful of his boasted duty. He was presently recalled to it, however, by the appearance of his lieutenant, who burst in upon the revelers with anger.

"Here you," he cried, "be off to camp!"

The Mexicans staggered to their feet and endeavored to stand at attention. Courtesy alone remained seated, staring blankly at the intruder after the manner of one in a helpless state of intoxication.

The lieutenant pointed to the prisoner, asking, "Who's that?"

The captain reeled to his feet and pawed at the table. "I'm Juan Almonte. Don't you know me, Señor?" he queried with a grin.

"No, you drunken fool!"

"Mistake — perfectly sober." Courtesy took a belligerent step forward, lost his balance and, in an attempt to recover himself, fell against the corporal, apologized profusely, and sat down.

"We found him prowling about the bank and arrested him according to orders," volunteered the corporal. "He says he's commissioned by his Excellency, but he's got nothing to prove it."

"I — guess — my — word's 'nough," hiccoughed the captain.

"We'll see," remarked the lieutenant. "Clear out, all of you," he thundered. "Leave the prisoner to me!"

The Mexicans made a pretence of saluting, gathered up their guns, and reeled out the door. As they went, Courtesy cast a covetous look at his sword, which lay upon the floor a long pace away from him. He dared not reach for it so long as the lieutenant watched him.

With deliberation the officer drew up a stool across the table from the outlaw and began. "Now what have you got to say for yourself, if you have wit left to speak?"

"Wit!" cried the captain sillily; "Señor Colonel, or is it General? — no matter — it's im-mag-i-na-tion — not titles or gold lace — which makes the man; and good drink's the fountain of fancy. Here, madre, fill up the Señor's glass!" he bawled

to the old woman, who was pottering about, unmindful of her guests.

"No, no," protested the lieutenant; "I'm on duty. Now, to the point: what are you doing here?"

"It's most con-fi-den-tial," lisped the outlaw. "Dismiss the madre."

At the Mexican's command, the old woman left the room.

"It's this, Señor," continued Courtesy; "his Ex-cel-len-cy sent me to your colonel to say that he'd changed his plans. He's not going to march up the San Ga-bri-el Val-ley, but he's going to San Pedro!"

"Imbecile," laughed the lieutenant; "we *are* ordered to San Pedro!"

He had no sooner said this than the captain surprised him with a blow, struck full in the face. The Mexican fell from his stool and before he recovered his wits, Courtesy caught up Jocoso's

sword and rushed out of the cabin. Then he ran across the bluff and scrambled down to where Paquita stood waiting in the willows. With a word to his mare, he leaped into the saddle and raced away southward.

"SOUND THE CALL TO ARMS"

CHAPTER XVI

"SOUND THE CALL TO ARMS".

AQUITA, with a toss of her head flaunted her mane in the breeze, neighed for very joy in her strength, and rolled the highway from under her hoofs with long steady strides, a pace which her rider calculated must cover by midnight the miles that lay between him and San Pedro. The road stretched away before the captain, white as a chalk mark in the moonlight. On his left, rippled the river, of which he caught a glimpse now and again through the shrubbery that margined it. On his right, the country rose undulating to the wooded slopes of the mountains, their peaks, reared high above a few vagrant clouds, glowing under halos of stars.

Before him lay a town, which appeared at first as a mere widening of the roadway. Now it

took form, the low adobe houses, with here and there a red spark — a light in a window — standing clear in the brilliant night.

Swerving off then from the road, he made a wide detour about the town and struck across country toward Clearwater. From there, that he might avoid any advance guard of General Castro's forces, he intended to follow an old trail through the chaparral which he remembered would bring him close to Dominguez. From that settlement he was confident that he might take the straight highway leading to San Pedro, with fair assurance of safety.

The country over which he was now riding, proving rougher, and therefore more dangerous, than he had anticipated, he swung back to the road, once he had avoided the town, and pushed on to the west. He was perhaps within three miles of Clearwater, at a place where the foliage arched the way so that the light was scant, when, from the shadow

of the trees, a voice bellowed through the night, calling him to halt.

The captain paid no heed to this order, only leaned low over the saddle-bow and urged the mare to a faster gait. A musket shot shattered the rhythmic tattoo of Paquita's tread. A ball clattered harmlessly in the boughs. Courtesy laughed in derision, yet he took warning, abandoned the road once more, and did not return to it until the red tile roofs of the settlement were well behind him.

Another mile, and he began to slacken his pace, keeping watch for the great redwood that sentineled the opening of the old trail. Presently he made out the tree, a few hundred yards ahead, towering against the sky, like the silhouette of a church spire. On each side, the forest grew thick, impenetrable, so that when he came suddenly upon a body of Mexican horsemen, drawn up across the road by the redwood, he realized that he must

either retreat, and possibly run into others of the same command, or rush past them into the trail, trusting to Paquita's speed for deliverance.

He chose the latter course and gave his mare the word. As though her muscles were springs of steel, she shot straight at the line of horsemen. So precipitous was her approach that the Mexicans had no time to use their weapons before Paquita broke through their ranks, cleared a fallen trunk — which lay across the opening of the trail — and plunged into the woodland road.

In an instant the Mexicans recovered themselves and, with a cry, took up the pursuit. It was rough riding, not only on account of the unevenness of the ground, but also because of the darkness, little light filtering through the dense foliage, and the boughs, in many places, hanging so low that the horsemen were in danger of being swept from their saddles. One by one the Mexicans fell out of the chase, until only a solitary rider followed at the

heels of Paquita. He was mounted on a big hunter of great bone and muscle, used to just such going, so that he stuck to the trail and even gained a yard or so, for the captain had no intention of riding faster than need be. He had no fear of a shot now, since his pursuer had fired unsuccessfully and he knew that there could be no reloading at that mad gait.

For full a half-hour the Mexican thundered along fifty yards behind Courtesy with no sign of tiring. Paquita, too, was still fresh, but her rider had no mind to put her endurance to so severe a test, when he yet had many miles to go. Therefore, he began to consider some means to rid himself of his enemy, and finally concluded that at the first clearing, which might offer room for an engagement, he would turn and fight it out with the Mexican.

More than a mile fell back from them before the captain found a spot entirely to his liking. It

was an open space, probably forty feet in diameter, which had doubtless been cleared for a camp, for to one side of the trail was a spring and close by it a blackened spot such as might have been made by a fire. The moonlight, unscreened here, showed all this to Courtesy in a moment. He pulled up his mare, whirled about, and faced his pursuer.

The Mexican broke into the glade at full tilt, but, with a fine display of horsemanship, brought up his mount within a foot of the captain. At the same instant, he rose in the stirrups, swung his sabre high above his head and brought it down upon the outlaw's guard with a ringing stroke. The trooper's heavier blade struck down the lighter one and cut Courtesy across the forehead.

Blinded by blood and dazed by the blow, the captain rocked in his seat, pitched forward, and might have fallen had he not flung out a hand and clutched the Mexican's jacket. Summoning all

his strength, he retained his hold and, with a sudden movement, at the same time bringing Paquita back on her haunches, he jerked his adversary from the saddle.

With an oath, the trooper fell head foremost into the spongy soil, while the captain wheeled Paquita about again and galloped on down the trail. Coming to a place where a brook crossed his path, he dismounted to wash the blood from his face and to bind up his wounded forehead. The cut was broad but not deep and he felt little the worse for it save that his head still ached from the blow.

In a half-hour he was out of the woods and racing along the open highway to Dominguez, which place he reached without further adventure, galloped through the sleeping town, and, with a sigh of relief, urged Paquita on toward San Pedro.

It was not long then before he began to sniff the salt air, blown inland from the sea. Judging by the moon, he reckoned that it lacked at least a half-

hour of midnight, so that he now felt assured of reaching his destination in good season. In fact, as he came within sight of San Pedro, the wind bore to his ears the sound of a bell striking twelve.

Presently he caught the glimmer of camp-fires, stretched along the foot of the hills to the northwest of the town, and making in that direction, came upon a sentry, who, after learning the captain's errand, led him into camp.

Scarcely an hour later, Captain Courtesy, with some three hundred mounted riflemen — a motley, ragged troop — thundered away toward Rivera.

"WHAT IS LOVE? I WILL TELL THEE"

CHAPTER XVII

"WHAT IS LOVE? I WILL TELL THEE"

ELEANOR was in her favorite seat at the mission window, as was her habit of an afternoon. Her hands lay idly in her lap, but her mind was actively engaged, as it had been for a month past, speculating upon the probable fate of him whom she loved and had sent away.

The padre, returning from a visitation, paused at the sight of the girl's sad face and then, sitting beside her, took her hand in his. She looked up at him, smiled wanly and sighed.

"Daughter," he began, "for days and weeks I have seen you fail in spirit and in health. You have interest in nothing." He touched her cheek. "There are little hollows here as though some one had scooped out your blooms. You are all eyes and sad ones at that. You are silent. You will

not be questioned. This must not go on. I cannot see you wither so. Confide in me."

"Dear Padre, there is nothing that I can help; nothing that you can do for me. It is too late."

"It is never too late," he remonstrated. "You will remember the thief upon the cross; with almost his last breath he found salvation."

"You should have thought of that before," she exclaimed with sudden bitterness.

"Before?" He was puzzled.

"Before you sent *him* away!" she cried, her hand to her breast, where she felt the pulsing of her heart through a crumpled mask.

Captain Courtesy was unfamiliar to the priest's thoughts. When on occasions he was reminded of the highwayman, it was only to congratulate himself that he had put the man so effectively out of Eleanor's life. In an instant, now, she had lifted the veil of her thoughts and discovered to him this outlaw. It was more than a surprise; it was a

shock. He said nothing for some little time. When he did speak it was to ask a question she had already answered, though not in words; "You still think of him?"

"I shall never cease to think of him," she replied. "His plea for forgiveness, for hope, still echoes in my heart." She changed her tone of fervor to one of bitterness. "We, we would not hear him." Her voice rang triumphantly now. "But the Christ is more merciful. Though that plea was addressed to me, I have no doubt it was heard by Him."

The priest defended himself by saying, "I ordered for what I thought, and still think, to be the best. Your happiness has been my charge. I dared not hazard that for the sake of such a man, a man so unworthy of you."

Eleanor rose to her feet with an exclamation of scorn, "Happiness! Happiness!" She made a turn of the room and then stopped before the old

man, laid her hands on his shoulders and said, with great tenderness and feeling, "Padre dear, you are old and good and wise and true, but age and goodness and wisdom and loyalty are not the total sum of life. I am as a child to you, yet I have a knowledge that you have not; a great item which is the whole of life's sum — we call it love. I have studied at your knee; now you shall learn at mine. Love takes no reckoning of rank or worth. It has no need, since to possess love is to be ennobled. So this man, whom we drove from San Gabriel because of his sins, became worthy the instant he loved."

"He was an outcast," interjected the priest.

"The more reason then, Padre, that we should have been merciful. Your thief upon the cross was no more repentant than my outlaw. The one was assured paradise; the other was driven away. If God should vouchsafe us as little mercy as we showed this man, for what might we hope?"

Remorsefully the old man exclaimed, "Daughter, daughter, I am a sad priest!" With chin sunk upon his chest, he sat for a long while in silence. At last he lifted his head, with an action of determination. "I'll bring him back to you," he cried.

Eleanor smiled at the padre with amiable superiority and asked, "Do you think he is the sort of man who would come at your call?"

On second thought the priest agreed that Courtesy would be unlikely to accept any overtures from him, but if Eleanor —

She anticipated his suggestion with, "I would not summon him, and I would not have him come until he should have proved himself as worthy as you demanded. I know that I could have made of him all that he should be; but I have pride for him now. He must do for himself what once I would have done for him."

For the first time in his life the padre felt him-

self impotent; before this child, too. Then he realized that the child had become the woman. With that thought a great sorrow arose in his heart. He knew and understood the child as he did his breviary; he might not know or understand the woman any more than he might translate the matins and vespers of the winds.

"BUT KISS YOUR HOSTESS AND GO YOUR WAY"

CHAPTER XVIII

"BUT KISS YOUR HOSTESS AND GO YOUR WAY"

THE padre was aroused from his reverie by the advent of Tim Burke, whom he welcomed cordially, for the lad had been absent a month.

"We thought you were with the riflemen," observed the priest.

"Sure an' I am," Tim returned promptly. "We're camped in th' chaparral on the hill." He pointed to a ridge less than half a mile distant, and went on: "I'm thinkin' we're here to wait for word from th' United States troops. There's goin' to be a jint attact be th' riflemen an' Colonel Kearny's boys, upon Los Angeles. I guess we've got to clean up thim greasers of Jocoso's at the presidio furst. Cap'n Courtesy — I mean Davis — "

Eleanor, who had shown but little interest, now turned to Tim eagerly. "Captain Courtesy — what — ?" She clenched her hands expectantly.

Tim was embarrassed. "There!" he groaned; "I've done it now; an' me wit' special instructions to keep me mouth shut."

"What about him? You were saying —" Eleanor was all eagerness.

"Well, Señorita, seein' as I've broke me orders, I might as well tell ye: he's in command of us. I jist was to come here an' find if ye was well an' all that, an' raport to him."

Eleanor was moved to embrace Tim, but all she did was to press his hand and inquire how long the captain had been with the riflemen.

"He jined a few days ahead o' me. It was him brought word to San Pedro that Castro was marching on the coast. Perhaps ye heard how he took command an' licked th' Mexicans jist below Rivera after they killed our old Cap'n Brunt?"

"We've heard nothing except that the riflemen have been conducting a vigorous campaign in the south," returned the padre.

"That's the word," cried Tim; "and it's him as did it."

"Is he well?" ventured Eleanor.

"Be th' power of his arm, Señorita, ye'd say yis; an' be th' look of him ye'd say no. He's thin as a colt an' as solemn as an Injun."

Eleanor was still puzzling as to whether she should be depressed or rejoiced over this intelligence, when Viviena Marshall dashed into the mission, closed the door quickly behind her and threw herself against it. "It's Jocoso," she gasped. "He's dreadful — I — had to fly from him — he's so persistent!"

There came a tap at the door. "That's Jocoso," she exclaimed.

"Ssssh!" warned Tim. "Don't ye let that greaser know as I'm here." With that, he re-

treated through the kitchen and thence, under cover of a cactus fence, reached the orange grove unseen. Eleanor had hurried after him, but he was gone before she could stop him. When she returned to the living room, she found Jocoso saluting the padre at the door.

The Mexican entered with a grin. "Hah, Padre, what you think?" he began, referring to the widow. "She make great imbecilo out of me — eh? Ah, I don' mind. Some day, I tell you, Padre, you also, Señorita, and you mostly, Señora, we get marry. You like that, Padre? Yes!" The lieutenant was all confidence, all happiness. He turned from one to the other, smiling. His expression instantly changed, however, as he saw through the door, which he had left open behind him, the figure of one of his sergeants. The man stopped on the threshold, saluted Jocoso, and held out a paper which was decorated with a huge red seal.

The lieutenant took the document, excused him-

self to the others and tore it open. It was brief. It ran: "On receipt of this order, Señor Jocoso shall call out his regiment, burn the San Gabriel Mission and the settlement about it, and put to death all who resist." It was signed by General Castro.

Jocoso was horrified. He reread the order a half-dozen times. It seemed incredible. He turned to the sergeant and inquired in Spanish,

"Are you sure there is no mistake about this order?"

"It was brought to the presidio by a courier riding in advance of his Excellency's army."

"In advance of his Excellency's army?" asked the lieutenant, astonished. "Where is the army?"

"It should be close by San Gabriel now, Señor. His Excellency is making a forced march to Los Angeles."

"Close by!" reiterated the officer; "then this order has been delayed?"

"Yes, Señor; the courier's horse was shot from under him; he travelled a long way on foot."

Jocoso pondered for a moment, then asked, "You know the contents of this order?"

"No, Señor!"

The lieutenant studied the paper again. "Mother of God," he exclaimed, finally; "there is no mistake!"

"What is the trouble?" ventured the padre.

"Ah," cried Jocoso, "this is —" He checked himself. He had been on the point of saying, "This is an assassin's commission, not a soldier's." Instead, he glared at the document, his lips twitching, his face pale. It was clear to all that he was suffering mental agony.

"What are your commands, Señor?" This came from the sergeant.

With a quick movement, Jocoso tore off his own epaulets and handed them to the messenger, exclaiming, "Take these to his Excellency! I am

no longer an officer of the Mexican army. Go!"

The amazement of the others was no less than that of the sergeant. He took the epaulets mechanically, saluted, and strode out of the house.

Viviena immediately precipitated herself into the lieutenant's arms, crying, "Jocoso, I love you!"

Somewhat embarrassed, he returned her embrace. Then, with naïve bravado, seasoned, one might say, with an air of proprietorship, he ventured to kiss his sweetheart.

"Tomorrow, maybe," said he, "if the Señora like and the Padre will, we get marry. This order, which I at first hate, now I adore; only becows it give me excusas I have wish for. It was impossible for me."

"What does the order signify?" inquired the priest.

Jocoso released himself from Viviena, and offered the paper to the padre. The women looked over the old man's shoulder.

"*Madre de Dios,*" gasped the padre. "And Castro is on his way here. He may even now be at the presidio."

"When he receives Jocoso's answer, he will no doubt execute this order himself," supplemented Eleanor. "We must send for the California Riflemen."

"Send me," suggested Jocoso.

Viviena's happiness was complete. She told Jocoso confidentially that she adored him, while the padre pointed out from the doorway the location of the troop. Jocoso took the order as his credentials and ran rapidly toward the encampment.

"NOW THE BATTLE COMES"

CHAPTER XIX

"NOW THE BATTLE COMES"

THE California Riflemen, responding to Jocosco's summons, came into conflict with Castro's advance guard, and the lieutenant's former regiment, at twilight, on the edge of the San Gabriel settlement. The Mexicans, completely surprised, fell back panic-stricken to the main body, while the riflemen hastened to fortify themselves behind the mission walls.

Night fell and under its cover Captain Courtesy rode away westward. His purpose was to bring to the reinforcement of San Gabriel a body of United States dragoons under General Kearny and Colonel Frémont, who were supposed to be marching upon Los Angeles. Whether under their government's orders or not, these officers, together with Commodore Stockton — who, commanding the Union

fleet in California waters, had taken San Pedro — were now actively engaged in the support of the revolution. So it was with every hope of a successful issue that the captain set out upon his errand, trusting the command of the riflemen to his lieutenant, Slade, an old Indian fighter and a man of cunning as well as courage.

With the advent of the troop, the mission became a fortress, the approach to which was disputed here and there by riflemen, entrenched behind cactus fences and the outlying walls of dismantled shops, tannery, and mills; while within the mission, every window and vantage point, from the bell tower to the low wall in front of the priest's house, showed a gun muzzle. Even in the chapel, whither the padre had sent the women, Black Moccasin sat on a window-ledge with a rifle across his knees.

Two candles, in tall brass sticks, burned on the altar. Otherwise, the chapel was dark.

From his post at the window, farthest from the

chancel, the Indian turned from his scrutiny of the night, to dwell for a moment upon the scene within, which had a profound fascination for him. The candles illuminated the gilded and tinted figures of Virgin and saints, carved in high relief, over the altar, whence they looked down with benevolence upon the padre, kneeling in prayer over the tomb of pioneer fathers. The light shone upon the silver bowl of holy water and the bright aspergill; it fell aslant the burnished lid of the copper font and laid bare the cracks in the brick tiles of the baptistry; it threw back the shadows a little from the white-yellow walls, disclosing portraits of saints which hung between the buttresses; and, as the flames flared up in a current of air, a streak of light leaped across the worn benches and for an instant picked out from the gloom the anxious faces of the women.

Thus, through that long night, they kept vigil in San Gabriel.

At last the candle-light began to pale and the watchers saw dawn fling wide the shutters of the night and morning's bright face peep over the sill of the east.

A puff of smoke greeted the rising sun, and clung for a moment to the tops of an orange grove, then floated over a near-by hill, like a gray scarf from the shoulder of a woman. A shot echoed through the valley and a black sphere whirled high over the mission. It was the signal of attack.

Instantly the noise of battle hurtled through the air as the Mexicans, under cover of the artillery, advanced in a long uncertain line, firing rapidly in irregular volleys as they came. They were met by scattering, but well-aimed shots from the entrenched riflemen, who checked the advance until the battery on the ridge, finding the range, made the outlying defenses untenable. Then the Mexicans pressed forward, took possession of the abandoned shelters, and held them, notwithstand-

ing the effective marksmanship of the Americans.

Eleanor turned from the window, where she had been watching, and dropped down on a bench beside Viviena, who was busily engaged rolling bandages. "I never want to go through another battle. This is dreadful," she exclaimed. "I'm so afraid."

"Look, look!" cried Gray Feather at her father's elbow.

Viviena sprang to the window. "Oh, Eleanor," she groaned; "they're driving the riflemen back from the cactus fence. Why don't those troops come?"

"Got come long trail," answered Black Moccasin, as he finished reloading his rifle. The Indian leveled his piece across the sill, held his breath, and sighted the gun at a Mexican who venturesomely climbed a low wall about two hundred yards away. Gray Feather watched, fascinated, while Eleanor and Viviena thrust their fingers in their ears and

shrank back in trepidation. The report of the rifle reverberated through the chapel.

"Got — him!" remarked Black Moccasin, with satisfaction, as the Mexican pitched over the wall.

Eleanor shuddered. "Don't say that — it seems like murder."

"No kill him, him kill us. Got long rifle." The Indian stoically rammed another ball home. As he was about to hand the rod to Gray Feather, it was struck from his grasp and a bullet flattened itself against the wall behind him. At the same time the padre, who had been making the rounds of the mission, entered the chapel. He carried a musket and over his shoulder swung a powder horn and bullet pouch. Black Moccasin was about to shoot again. The old man called upon him to stop, saying, "You're drawing their fire. Come with me."

The Indian obediently left the window and followed the priest to an inner door. Eleanor looked

at the old man in amazement. "Where are you going?" she asked, raising her voice that she might be heard above the tumult without.

"To fight," returned the padre.

"You, a priest, fight?"

"Why not?" he inquired, his eyes flashing from under his heavy brows. "San Gabriel was dedicated to God. I have protected it with other weapons before now. Today it seems to me that a gun will serve Him best."

The padre took Black Moccasin by the arm and they went out together.

Eleanor, ill with dread, leaned back against the wall under a portrait of Saint Padua. Her imagination conjured up a dozen deaths for the old priest and she saw, in fancy, Courtesy lying pale and still beneath the redwood chapparal of a mountain trail. "Mother of God, protect them," she murmured. "Viviena, Viviena, I know that we shall all be killed."

"Don't say that, dear. Jocoso is out there fighting for us, too. We must keep up courage." The widow started at the sound of some one opening the door, and discovered a man. He was hatless, his face so blackened with powder and his eyebrows and hair so singed that she did not recognize him. Only at the sight of what had once been a scarlet uniform, but which was now mostly shreds and grime, she shrank back in fear, thinking that the enemy had invaded the mission.

The intruder paused and bowing said, "*Muchas excusas!* You got a gun you don't use?"

"Jocoso!" cried Viviena, both surprised and alarmed. "You are hurt?"

He backed away from her embrace, grinning. "Maybe no! My gun was. Him explode."

"Have you been fighting?" Viviena clung to one of his grimy hands.

"No," he responded gravely; "I have just come from a concerto."

A cannon ball crashed through the chapel wall, carrying away a crucifix and scattering bits of plaster and stone over the tiled floor.

Unconsciously Eleanor went to Jocoso in trepidation. "Shall we be defeated?" she asked.

The Mexican shook his head dubiously. "Ten Mexicanos to one Americano. But now I got Americano heart from *querida mia*," said he, with a look at the widow, "I got ten more time the same courage as other Mexicanos."

Viviena squeezed his hand.

"Say you got no gun?"

They told him there were no arms in the chapel.

"Quick I go then." He disengaged himself from the widow.

"Kiss me!" she commanded.

He dodged her and, when he had reached the door, called back, "I kiss you when I wash my face after battle." He disappeared.

Then, above the continuous rattle of small arms

and the intermittent discharge of cannon, they heard the crash of a musket volley, fired as from one gun, and a cheer arose from the beleaguered mission.

Eleanor and Viviena ran with eagerness to the window where Gray Feather kept persistent watch. What they saw was a shroud of smoke, gray, inscrutable, hanging low over the landscape, like a night mist. Above it shone the sun; beneath it shadowed forth the hurrying feet of men. Then, as the wind stirred the smoke into eddies, the women at the window caught a glimpse of blue uniforms as Kearny's troop swept by the chapel and drove Castro's men from the outlying walls.

Now and again the women heard the boom of the Mexican cannon verberating over the rattle of musketry, like the deep tones of an organ surging above the voices of a distant choir. The noise of battle became more intense and the smoke of it bil-

lowed across the face of the mission, shutting out even the light of the sun.

They stood watching for some time in silence. Presently Viviena, grown impatient, exclaimed, "I can't see. I'm going up to the tower. You can get a better view from there. Come on!"

As she disappeared through one door, without waiting for the others to follow, Tim Burke, trailing a musket, entered by another, staggered forward a step and fell face down on the tiles. Immediately, Gray Feather was on the floor beside him. She took his head in her lap, moaning, while Eleanor, with nimble fingers, ripped the sleeve of the lad's jacket. A bullet had passed through a muscle of his arm and severed an artery. Eleanor quickly knotted a bit of bandage above the wound, checked the flow of blood, revived the youth, and dressed his arm.

As Tim gazed up at the Indian girl and saw the wonder of tears in her eyes, he asked faintly and

with a grin, "What'r ye bawlin' for? I ain't a corpse."

Gray Feather vouchsafed no answer, only looked smilingly at him in a way that perhaps Eleanor best understood.

"You feel better?" Eleanor inquired.

"Sure, I'm all right. Jist hoist me to me feet. I can stand," he insisted.

They placed him on a bench. "I do feel a bit wabbly," he confessed, leaning back against wall. "Thank ye, Señorita," he added, as Eleanor laid his arm in a sling. "You're an angel." At the same time he thrust out his uninjured arm to the Indian girl and drew her close to him.

Eleanor turned away from them to pick up Tim's musket and, when she had placed it against a buttress, she inquired of the youth whether he had heard or seen anything of Captain Courtesy. Tim had both heard and seen, and went on to tell that it was Courtesy who had brought up General

Kearny's outfit; how the captain had plunged into the thick of battle and led the riflemen until struck by a ball.

"Shot?" Eleanor's eyes widened with alarm.

"Ah, he ain't kilt entirely," Tim reassured her, "but he was hit hard. Me and Jocoso carried him back of the old soap shop an' fixed him up. Do ye mind, all th' time he was axin' about ye: was ye safe an' all that."

"I must go to him," she said with determination.

"'Tain't no use," Tim declared. "He's back fightin' again. But he give me a message for ye. He says, 'Tim, if ye gits through alive an' I don't, take this to Señorita Brinton an' tell her I've kept me word." The lad thrust his hand in his shirt and plucked forth a bit of kerchief rolled up and stained a reddish brown.

Eleanor hesitated to take it. A sensation of horror smote her. What message should be sealed

in such an envelope? Death! She believed that Tim lied to her. "Thank you," was all that she said. Her voice sounded even. She seemed unmoved. Only in her eyes might Tim have discovered her misery. She sank down on a bench and unfolded the piece of cambric. A partly withered rose, dyed a deeper crimson than ever nature had painted it, fell into her lap. She did not see Tim and Gray Feather steal out of the chapel. The past month whirled before her mind's eye, like a panorama. She saw the captain, over Paquita's head, take the rose from her hand; saw him across the breakfast table in piquant intimacy; saw him tremble as she sewed a button on his tunic; saw him defy Jocoso and the detail; saw the suffering in his face as he pleaded his cause, and his hopelessness when they closed the door upon him.

There the panorama came abruptly to an end, but her fancy builded up another scene of such dread that it brought her to her feet with a cry.

She started for a door, which was then flung open from without and Jocoso and a rifleman dragged Captain Courtesy into the chapel.

"THE LAST GREAT STAKE"

CHAPTER XX

"THE LAST GREAT STAKE"

ELEANOR stood wonder-struck, before this apparition of the captain, her heart in a turmoil. She was at once thankful and fearful. Courtesy's head was bound in what had once been a white kerchief but which was now brown and grimy. Strands of his hair hung over his forehead, matted with blood, which also streaked his tanned face and ploughed furrows through the coat of dust and powder. His buckskin and linen showed the stains of battle. His breeches and boots were flecked with the lather of his horse.

He returned her gaze pityingly. For a moment, at the first sight of him, a rose tint animated her cheeks, then faded, leaving her face even more pallid than before. Her veins showed blue in her temples, while under her lids shadows had gathered,

setting her eyes deeply in her head and lending them, by contrast, an unearthly brilliancy. She seemed to the captain like some worn, disheveled angel.

Courtesy made a move as though to free himself from the men who held him.

"Señorita," exclaimed Jocoso, "el Capitán mucho hurted. Make him to stay."

"I'm not! Let me go," insisted the outlaw, with a vain attempt to free himself. "Señorita, tell them to let me go." There was something very like a sob in his entreaty.

Eleanor laid her hand on his arm. "I beg of you to rest here — just for a moment."

Her touch seemed to take from him what little resolution remained. His knees bent beneath him. Jocoso and the rifleman helped him to a bench, while Eleanor brought a cup of wine.

"Don't let him go, Señorita," admonished Jocoso, as he unbuckled the captain's sword and laid

"Can't You Be Reasonable?" She Cried

it on the bench. Then he withdrew with the rifleman.

Courtesy, seeing them gone, handed Eleanor the cup, picked up his sword and started to his feet.

She faced him with anger. "Can't you be reasonable?" she cried.

"No," he answered doggedly.

"Well, you shan't go!" She snatched the sword from him. "Sit down!" she commanded. He mechanically obeyed. "You behave like a child," she went on; "you are badly wounded."

"But there's fighting to be done," he grumbled.

Eleanor ignored his remark, brought him a basin and napkin and insisted that he should bathe his face.

"I wish you wouldn't make such a fuss about me," he exclaimed with petulance. "I'm all right."

"But you look horrible. Besides you'll feel better for it."

When at last he had performed his ablutions to her satisfaction, she decided that he should have a fresh bandage about his head.

"No, I haven't time for that," he objected. "I should be out there now. Where's my sword?"

She held it from him. "I shall not let you go yet."

"You would, Señorita, if you knew what I am fighting for." The captain sat down again and pressed his fists to his forehead.

"I do know: You are fighting for us."

"Yes, but for myself as well." She questioned him with a look. "More than my life is at stake," he explained. "If we win this battle, it means that not only you and yours shall be safe here, but that California shall be free. Commodore Stockton, of the United States Navy, is now taking Los Angeles; the army of the great republic is thrashing Mexico on the Texan border; General Kearny, who is here with us today, tells me

that our success will give his government an excuse to take us as a free State into the Union. California shall become a part of the United States of America. Can you see how that would affect me? California no longer under Mexican rule, I shall no longer be an outlaw. I shall be a citizen of the republic. I may serve my country then as honestly as you might wish. And, though I may never hope to win you, at least I shall so live that you must think better of me."

He had risen as he spoke and now stood facing Eleanor. She held out her hand to him, saying, "God is good to us."

He scarcely heard her, for the din of the battle reverberated through the chapel with renewed violence, yet he caught her meaning in her eyes. It was a strange moment of inspiration to him, in which he seemed to see nothing but her eyes, and he vowed to himself that henceforth they should be as the altar lights of his soul. He sank on his

knees and pressed her fingers to his cheek. She felt a warm tear on her hand and understood and loved him the more because he was silent.

When he arose, he held out his hand for the sword. She dreaded to give it to him. "You must go?" she asked.

"Would you have me stay now?" he returned.

"Yes, because I fear for your life; no, because I would have you fearless, even unto death." She clasped his sword belt about him, her fingers fumbling with the buckle.

He saluted her and went his way. As he closed the door behind him, he felt faint and paused, leaning against the wall. Nature rebelled. He had overdrawn his account with her. He had ridden all night; he had fought all morning; he had not tasted food for hours; yet he had performed the service of ten men. So, what with fatigue, lack of nourishment, and loss of blood, his strength was exhausted. Only his will kept him on his feet,

but now even his brain flagged. He was conscious that if he fell he might not be able to rise again. He propped himself in the angle of a buttress and mechanically prayed for strength.

Meanwhile, within the chapel, Eleanor watched by a window. Through the rifts in the smoke, she caught brief glimpses of Kearny's troops charging the battery on the ridge, of a cactus fence sheltering a group of wounded men, of a bit of golden mustard-field where American and Mexican lay side by side, like brothers, in the long sleep.

Watching, she too was watched. George Granville observed her from the shelter of a pepper-tree. He had come up to San Gabriel with Castro's army. He took no part in the battle; nevertheless, being interested in the result, he followed its vicissitudes from a safe distance. With the arrival of the United States troops and the constant shifting of the Mexicans' ground, he

found himself within the American lines. Then, for greater security, he took a position close to the chapel.

It was about this time that he saw Eleanor at the window. The battle was at its height. He judged her to be alone and, with no ordered project in his mind, only a vague purpose of revenge for the fancied wrongs she had done him, he mounted the stone stairs which were set against the chapel wall, and broke open the door to the choir loft. In a few moments he was standing behind her. She felt his look and turned to him with a start. As she watched him uncertainly, the Quixotic notion came to him that, under cover of the turmoil, he might fly with her to Mexico.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, fearfully.

"I have come to take you away," he replied. Without heeding her exclamation of contempt, he went on. "The fight's lost. The mission will

be fired. You will be taken prisoner. Come while we may yet escape."

"You coward! Go! save yourself!" She left him.

He followed her. "I'm not going alone," he said and, seizing her by the wrists, began dragging her up the aisle.

She struggled with him. "You beast!" she cried.

"I love you when your eyes flash," he laughed.

With a sudden movement she broke away from him and ran toward the door, calling for the captain, but Granville caught her again, and in his arms, exclaiming, "Cry out; your voice is lost in the noise of the battle."

Courtesy, however, propped in the angle of the buttress just outside of the door did hear. Eleanor's cry electrified him. The lethargy fell from him, like a cloak. He staggered to the chapel door and flung it open.

At the sight of the captain, Granville pushed Eleanor from him with a curse and, looking about for a weapon, saw Tim's musket by the window. He snatched it up and, aiming it at Courtesy, pulled the trigger. The hammer fell with a click. The gun was unloaded. It was equipped, however, with a bayonet. He leveled it at the captain and charged him. At the same time, Eleanor sprang between the men, but Granville flung her aside. This interruption gave Courtesy time to guard himself.

"I shall kill you here as I did your people in San Pedro," cried Granville, in a passion, striking at the captain, who was so overcome at this intelligence that he could scarcely defend himself. His sword struck from his hand, he tottered and fell upon his back, and lay still as though he were dead.

"He's done for," exclaimed Granville with satisfaction, bending over him.

Eleanor started toward the captain, sobbing,

when she saw him throw up his arms and grasp the musket. With an exclamation of chagrin, Granville tried to wrench the weapon from Courtesy's hold. In the struggle the outlaw regained his feet.

As they wrestled for possession of the gun, the clear notes of a bugle, sounding "stop firing," rose high above the confusion of battle, and presently the boom of cannon and the staccato reports of musketry ceased. Still the men within the chapel struggled back and forth from wall to wall. To Eleanor it was a scene of terrible fascination. The tenacity of Courtesy at first amazed and then angered his opponent. Granville became intoxicated with passion, so that his rage blinded both his sight and his wits. He exhausted his strength without effect; his confidence flagged, and he began to wish himself well out of it. Yet he dared not release his hold. Courtesy, who had been husbanding his strength, suddenly, at this sign of weakening, with a furious twist, wrenched the

musket free. At that instant Granville, losing his footing, went down on one knee, clutching a broken wrist.

Immediately the captain stood over him, his weapon raised, the bayonet pointing at the renegade's breast. He was about to strike, when Eleanor stayed his arm.

"No, no, Leonardo," she cried. It was an appeal; not a command.

"He is the murderer of my father, my mother," returned the captain terribly, with bayonet still poised.

"Be merciful," she entreated; "don't take your revenge. Show yourself worthy of my love."

He hesitated for a moment, gave a groan, the only demonstration of the end of a great conflict in his soul, and suffered her to take the musket from his hands.

"Go!" he commanded.

In obedience, Granville got to his feet, without

a word, disappeared through a door and was gone out of their lives.

Courtesy looked at Eleanor uncertainly. She threw aside the musket and held out a hand to him. Still he stood bewildered.

Then, from without, they heard a vaunting cry: "The Mexicans are in full retreat!" and the padre calling, "The victory is ours!"

"The victory is *yours*, Señor!" whispered Eleanor.

Captain Courtesy, understanding the dear invitation of her eyes, better than her triumphant words, took her hand humbly, wondering if a mortal might dare embrace one, who seemed almost a saint, standing within the gates of Paradise. But — since a saint may also be a woman — it is permitted to her, the choice having been made, to *give* herself in love. All of which was the captain's particular business and none of ours.

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